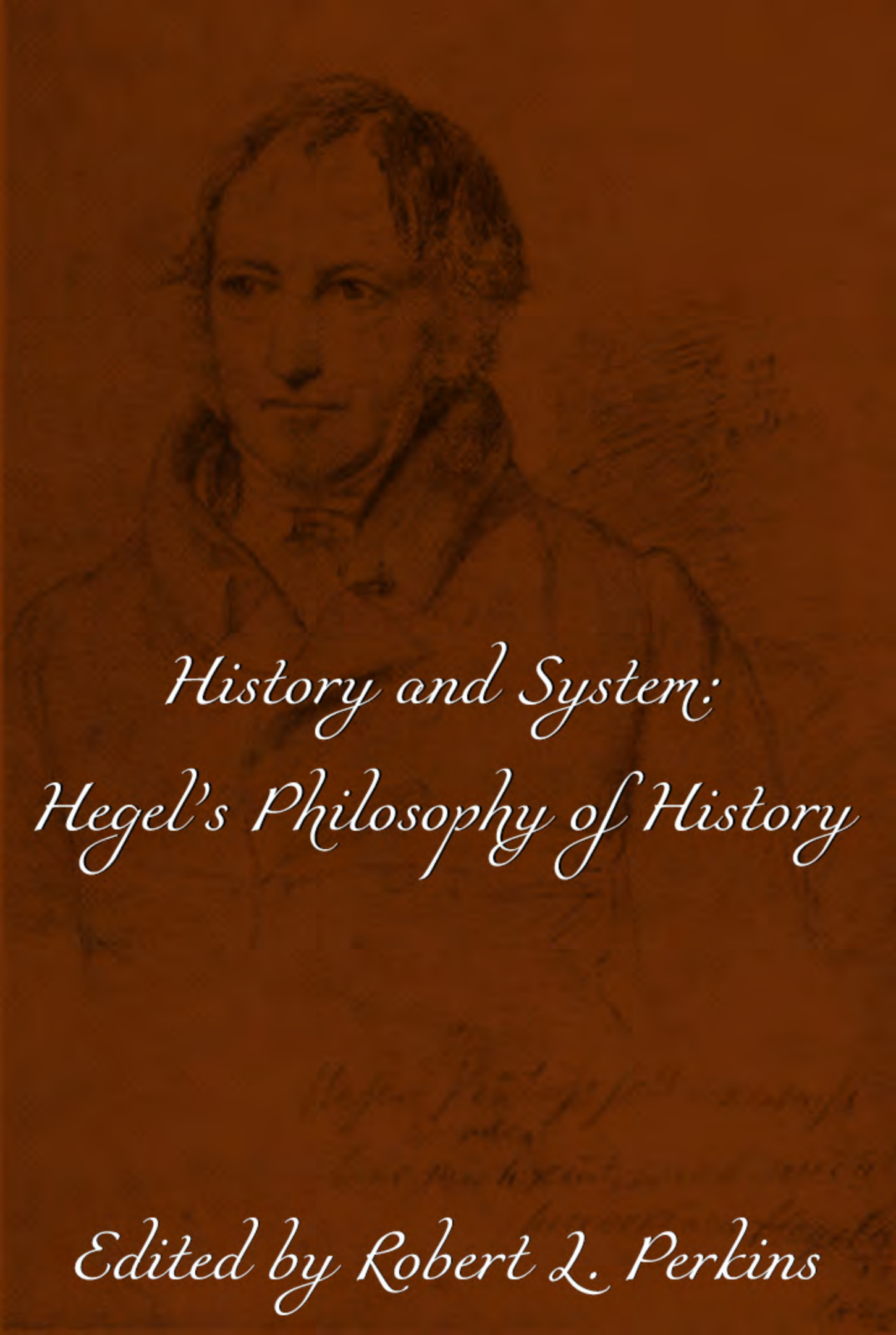


History and System: Hegel's Philosophy of History

Edited by Robert L. Perkins

History and System

SUNY Series in Hegelian Studies

Quentin Lauer, Editor

History and System
Hegel's Philosophy of History

Proceedings of the 1982 Sessions of the Hegel Society of America

Edited by Robert L. Perkins
University of South Alabama

State University of New York Press
ALBANY

Published by
State University of New York Press, Albany
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For information, address State University of New York Press, State University Plaza, Albany, N.Y., 12246
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:
History and system.
(SUNY series in Hegelian studies)
“Proceedings of the 1982 sessions of the Hegel Society of America.”
1. HistoryPhilosophyHistory19th centuryCongresses. 2. Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 1770-1831Congresses. I. Perkins, Robert L., 1930-II. Hegel
Society of America. Ill. Series.
D16.8.H6245 1984 901 83-24244
ISBN 0-87395-814-4
ISBN 0-87395-815-2 (pbk.)

Contents

Editor's Preface vii

1. Hegel as Poet, 1

Quentin Lauer: Presidential Address

2. The Historical Dialectic of Spirit: Jacob Boehme's Influence on Hegel 15

David Walsh

Comment: Eric Von Der Luft 37

3. The Fossil and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volkgeist 47

Shlomo Avineri

Comment: Leo Rauch 65

4. Hegel and the Reformation 73

Merold Westphal

Comment: David A. Duquette 93

5. World History and the History of the Absolute Spirit 101

Walter Jaeschke

Comment: Patricia Altenbernd Johnson 117

6. The Theory and Practice of the History of Freedom: On the Right of History in Hegel's Philosophy of Right 123

Richard Dien Winfield

Comment: Harry Brod 145

7. The Dialectic in Hegel's Philosophy of History 149

Rolf Ahlers

Comment: Joseph C. Flay 167

8. Hegel, Art, and History 173

William Desmond

Comment: Curtis L. Carter 185

9. On The Impotence of Spirit 195

George Di Giovanni

Comment: Thomas E. Wartenberg 213

10. Hegel's Challenge to the Modern Economy, the Thomas A. Roe Foundation Prize Paper 219

Richard Dien Winfield:

Index 255

Editor's Preface

The essays collected in this volume were presented at the Seventh Biennial Meeting of the Hegel Society of America, held at Clemson University, from October 7-9, 1982. The society expresses its appreciation to the university for its hospitality and to Professor William Maker for serving as local arrangements chairman. Thanks are also due him for influencing the officers of the Thomas A. Roe Foundation to create a handsome prize for the best paper on the topic, "Hegel on Economics and Freedom." The prize-winning paper appears as chapter 10 of this volume. The presidential address, by Quentin Lauer, and the Roe prize paper, by Richard Dien Winfield, complement each otherthe former an essay on how to read Hegel and the latter a controversial reading of Hegel.

The theme of the volume is Hegel's philosophy of history, a subject on which he never published a major work but which nevertheless informs all his writing. With the possible exceptions of Augustine and Vico, no philosopher before him had such a deep sense of the mutual penetration of history and philosophy as did Hegel. Historical reflection influenced his reading of other philosophers, and philosophical reason penetrated his views of past events and eras. Other thinkers attempted to apply Hegel's way of thinking to problems he did not address. These insights are characterized by the thematic papers by Walsh, Avineri, and Westphal.

The four succeeding papers are a constructive effort to assess the relation of Hegel's views of history to the System: to the concept of Absolute Spirit, to the history of freedom, to dialectic, and to art. Jaeschke, Winfield, Ahlers, and Desmond struggle with these wider systematic struggles.

Finally, di Giovanni raises some difficult questions about the whole

Hegelian project and about the intellectual propriety of the efforts of the several authors in this collection.

I wish to express my appreciation to those who helped in the selection of the papers. Also, a word of thanks must go to those who submitted papers that we could not include, as well as to the commentators, who contributed so much to the direction of the discussion.

ROBERT L. PERKINS
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

Chapter One
Hegel as Poet

Quentin Lauer

To anyone who is at all familiar with Hegel's explicit attempts to write poetryand I presume that each of us has at one time or another come in contact with those abortive attemptsit might well come as a surprise that an address to the Hegel Society of America should speak of Hegel as a "poet." We have but to compare his cerebral meanderings with the superb poetry of that friend of his youth, Höld-erlin, to come to the conclusion that Hegel had no talent at all for poetry. I sometimes wonder how even one who loved him as much as did his fiancée could refrain from laughing at the "poems" he wrote to her during their engagement. I submit at the outset, however, that it is no more strange to entertain the notion of Hegel as poet than it is to consider the harsh things that Plato had to say about poetry and the poets and at the same time to claim that Plato himself is to be numbered among the greatest of the poetsand here I speak not only of the manifest poetry of the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus,* but also of the equally sublime imaginative outpouring of the *Parmenides,* the *Sophist,* and the *Timaeus.* Nor would it be very much to the point to object here that Plato might well be as surprised as would Hegel to hear his philosophizing referred to as poetry. (One wonders whether even Homer was as self-consciously poetic as are lesser poets of a later age; was he trying to compose poetry, or was he trying to say something in a superbly imaginative way?) In any event, if we fail to grasp the poetic in the great works of Plato, we may find ourselves condemned to put up with the trivializing logic-chopping of so much of what today goes under the heading of "Plato scholarship," just as we may, if we fail to see the poetic in Hegel's thought, find ourselves condemned to take seriously those who downgrade

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the immature meanderings of Hegel's "Jena Phenomenology" and the 1812 *Science of Logic* in favor of the "mature" Hegel of the *Encyclopedia* and the "Berlin Lectures"as though it were necessary to make both Plato and Hegel dull in order to make them intelligible. At the very least it would mean refusing to see in Hegel the embodiment of Shakespeare's highly poetic picture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* of the poet whose

> … eye in a fine frenzy rolling
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And, as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
>
> [1]

It might, of course, be argued that, on this view, Hegel is a poet only in the sense that any great philosopher is a poet, precisely because to master the art of philosophical expression is to employ language in such a way as not simply to convey meaning, but equally important, to elicit an emotional response to the philosophical enterprise. There is unquestionably considerable truth to this argument; to read a great work of a great philosopher without emotion is simply not to read it; like poetry, philosophy *does* something to you, something more than simply getting your rather desiccated logical juices flowing. One could go so far as to say, for example, that to read (or, perhaps, listen to) Plato's *Timaeus* without being moved by its artistic beauty is to be unphilosophical. The same, however, could be said of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* or Plotinus's *Enneads,* Augustine's *Confessions,* Aquinas's *De Potentia,* Spinoza's *Ethics,* Leibniz's *Monadology,* Kant's *Third Critique*or, perhaps, of Whitehead's *Process and Reality.* One has not, then, said anything new or startling when one speaks of the poetic beauty of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* or *Science of Logic.* It is my contention, however, that in his work Hegel unites the poetical and the philosophical, imagination and speculation, in a way that is rare even among great philosophers. it would undoubtedly be a mistake to place too much emphasis on a fragment of a youthful proposal for the systematic development of a moral metaphysics, but it is, nevertheless, not without significance that, as early as 1796, Hegel set forth views on the

union of aesthetics and philosophy which eventually culminated in his monumental *Phenomenology of Spirit* and which views still enable us to read his *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* as a continuing testimony to his conviction that, only if it unites religious truth, moral goodness, and artistic beauty can philosophy make any claim on the human spirit. In "The Earliest SystemProgram of German Idealism," which stems from the period of Hegel's house tutor-

ship in Berne, and the translation of which we owe to Henry' Harris (incidentally, we can, I think, agree with Harris that this is Hegel's own work and not that of Hölderlin or Schelling), Hegel very clearly speaks of philosophizing as an aesthetic activity:

> Last of all the idea that unites all the rest, the idea of *beauty,* taking the word in its highest Platonic sense. I am now convinced that the highest act of reason, the one through which it encompasses all ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that truth and goodness become sisters only in beautythe philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet.
>
> 2

Hegel does not, it is true, say that philosophy *is* poetry, nor does he say that it is in the *Lectures on Aesthetics,* where, in his peroration to the entire course of lectures, he speaks of the presentation of beauty as that which liberates the spirita task which, we know, he takes to be that of philosophy, too; this it is that philosophy *does* to you. It is understandable that in a series of lectures in which he enumerates the genres of poetry as epic, lyric, and dramatic, he would not want to include philosophy under any of the three headings. The question, however, might be asked whether the philosopherthe great philosopherdoes not produce a fourth genre of poetry, which we call philosophy. Or, perhaps, the question might be put differently: Did Hegel himself in his speculative philosophizing exercise an art which, although it cannot be included under any of the genres he enumerates, is nevertheless poetic? Let us call it the "art of philosophy."

There can be no question that Hegel himself says that poetry is *not* philosophy. At least there is no room in the history of philosophy for the study of the poets. In Greek civilization (perhaps in every civilization) the flowering of philosophy postdates the flowering of art and poetrywhich is one of the points Hegel is trying to get across to us in his poetic image of the flight at dusk of the Owl of Minerva. Does this late flowering necessarily preclude philosophy as a form of poetryeven though the art of philosophy is not self-consciously poetic? Even granting that poetryparticularly as produced by professed poetsis not philosophy, that is no reason to say that philosophy cannot be poetic, that is, evocative of aesthetic response to rational contentperhaps it *should* be, if it is to remain true to its vocation of being creative of spirit. It is no more unphilosophical

to recognize the poetry of philosophy than it is unscientific for Pierre Duhem to say that physical theory evokes aesthetic response. I should hasten to add here that what I shall be concerned with is not what Hegel has to say *about* poetry (or about what makes a poet a poet) but rather with the poetry of Hegel's (ostensible) proseeven though, in his theory of art, Hegel does not theorize about this kind of poetry.

Philosophical language cannot entirely dispense with propositional formbut neither can it be tied down by it. One might well ask whether philosophical writing that dispenses with a highly imaginative use of language is adequately philosophical. One thing, at least, seems abundantly clear: it would be an injustice to Hegel to lump all his philosophical writing under the heading of *prose*despite the efforts of so many of his commentators to render him prosaic. His own constant insistence both that the mere proposition is inadequate to express philosophical truth (he was impatient with propositional form it does not get said what needs to be said), and that there is a greater affinity between poetic imagination and speculative reason than there is between understanding and reason, precisely because poetry is pre-eminently illustrative of the dialectical movement of spirit,

3 make it clear that, whether or not we want to look upon Hegel's writing as poetic, we are sure to misread him if we read what he writes as prose and only prose. What happens when we read Hegel's philosophy is what happens, according to W. H. Auden, when we experience great art:

> Imagination is redeemed from promiscuous fornication with
> her own images….
> Reason is redeemed from incestuous fixation on her own logic.4

By the same token we are bound to do violence to Hegel's textbe it the text of the *Phenomenology,* the *Science of Logic,* or the *Philosophy of World History*if we insist on bringing to that reading the canons of a "logic of the understanding," which has but little in common with Hegel's own "speculative logic," especially without having given any *philosophical* justification for insisting on a logical precision that is simply foreign to Hegel's purpose in writing, thus according less importance to *what* Hegel is saying than to the narrowly logical consistency of the *saying.* One wonders indeed whether that sort of precision can or should be achieved where one has important and/or interesting things to say. To cling to such a "logic of understanding" is to call a halt to the dialectical advance of speculative reason, which is at once "philosophical" and "poetic" in calling upon all the resources the human spirit has at its disposal. Of course it is integral to the dialectical movement that understanding tear asunder in abstract conceptualization the sensuous images which initiate the process. By the

same token, however, in Hegel's view, that conceptualization must go beyond itself in the *Aufhebung* proper to pure speculative thought. Nor is that enough; if the advance is to be effective, the spirit must call on poetry for an imaginative articulation of what in speculative thinking is dialectically comprehended.[5]

There is, admittedly, a difficulty one must come to terms with, if

one wishes to read Hegel's writing as poetry and not as prose. The difficulty stems, in a way at least, from what Hegel himself has to say about the difference between the art of prose composition and that of poetic compositionnote well that Hegel refers to each as an "art," not only in the sense that writing, be it of prose or poetry, is an art, but also in the sense that each involves a specific art of thinking. Prose, he tells us in the *Lectures on Aesthetics,* seeks to convey a *meaning,* whereas poetry seeks to evoke an *image*and thus prose is concerned with meaning in a way that poetry is not. Given a content, then, which is meaning, our "conceiving [*Vorstellen*] becomes a mere means of bringing the content to consciousness. Prose, therefore, needs neither to put before our eyes the immediate [*nähere*] reality of its objects noras is the case when an expression is inappropriateto evoke in us another conception which goes beyond what is to be expressed."

6 Apparently, in Hegel's eyes, there is a certain chasteness in prose that need not be insisted on in poetrywhich *could* lead us to ask whether his own vivid prose does not often forego precisely that chasteness:

> Granted it can also be necessary in prose to describe (*bezeichnen*) clearly and sharply the externals of its objects. This, however, occurs not for the sake of the imagery but in view of some sort of practical aim. In general, then, we can set down as a law for the mode of representing proper to prose, on the one hand *correctness* and, on the other, precise *determinateness* and *intelligibility,* whereas the metaphorical and imaginative is in general relatively imprecise and incorrect.7

It would seem, then, that Hegel is opting for prose rather than poetry as the appropriate vehicle for the expression of philosophical thought. To this we might add that Hegel seems to be calling for what we ourselves tend to look for in philosophical writing. The point, however, is to determine whether Hegel himself adheres as closely as we might expect to the rule he enunciates. If the answer to that question is negative, we might further inquire whether his philosophy is the poorer for his not doing so. We might also ask whether the almost universal difficulty in coming to grips with Hegel's thought springs to a great extent from the determination to read what he says as prose and only prose; reading is itself an art we must cultivate if we are to come to grips with Hegel's thinking, that is,

experience it for what it is. Not only is reading an art however, there is a special art of reading Hegel. He makes enormous demands on usabove all that we learn to read himand we shall not learn to read Hegel by reading Bertrand Russell or A. J. Ayer. I venture to say that we cannot even *begin* to understand what Hegel is trying to say, if we insist on

taking only the technical philosophical (not to say logical) approach to it; his dialectical thinking constantly breaks through the confines of ordinary logic; if we fail to see this, we fail to read Hegel. Perhaps what needs to be said is that Hegel has succeeded in dissolving the dichotomy of "systematic" (scientific) philosophy and "poetic" (artistic) philosophyand this is the synthesis of art and philosophy in the dialectic of "speculative thinking," which cannot be tied down to arbitrary *rules,* however "logical" it might seem to insist on just such rules. It may, of course, be asking too much to demand that philosophy be at once "scientific" and "poetic," but this depends on what one chooses to mean by "scientific." If to be scientific is to adhere to the rules of a "logic of understanding," then clearly never the twain shall meetbut, then, neither could the *Science of the Experience of Consciousness* nor the *Science of Logic* be called "scientific." In any event, it seems safe to say that Hegel says more to us when we read what he says as poetic*how* he says it can be as important as *what* he says. Let me put it this way: there are times when I read Hegel and I am sure I am not alone in thiswhen the whole thing comes across to me as immensely imaginative (the reading itself is an aesthetic experience). Then it is that I specifically resent those who would want to turn his thought into *precise* thought (or precise expression), or who find fault with him for not being precise. Let us face it, Hegel gets to you, like it or not. It might be objected that this is a *psychological,* not a *philosophical* experienceonly the experience of what is logically compelling can be the latterbut this is equivalent to contending that one has no business saying "wow!" in the presence of a great philosopher, that it is philosophical to put a premium on being low-key. Don't get excited; it's gauche. Artistic expression in languageand who can deny that Hegel is this sort of artistdoes more than convey meaning, it also elicits emotion. Emotion without meaning, of course, is chaotic; but meaning without emotion is deadand, where meaning is truly profound, it cannot but evoke emotion; and profound emotion is profoundly meaningful.

When all this has been said, however, I must hasten to assert that it is not Hegel in his theory of artor of the poetic artwho enables us to come to grips with the question of whether the art form he employs in articulating his philosophical system can justifiably be called poetic. He does, nevertheless, tell us that no content can legitimately be excluded from the possibility of

expression in poetic form. More than that, he does quite clearly indicate that, just as in religion, so in poetry, the content that is expressed can very well be *rational.*

8 If nothing more, this quite clearly implies that a philosophical content can be expressed in poetic form.9 It is difficult to find in his mature theory of the poetic art anything more explicit than this. If

we are willing, however, to return to his "System-Program" of 1796, we can find some remarks which, although they may not adumbrate his *theory,* may very well point forward to what he is going to *do* actually in his own philosophical work. "Here I shall discuss particularly," he tells us, "an idea which, as far as I know, has never occurred to anyone elsewe must have a new mythology, but this mythology must be in the service of the ideas, it must be a mythology of *reason.*"

10 Apart from the fact that it may seem indeed arrogant for the 26-year-old Hegel to lay claim to this idea as his and his alone, it does seem to indicate a conviction not only that a richly metaphorical language (a mythological language) is appropriate to the expression of rational ideas, but also that it may well be needed, if those ideas are to be expressed adequately, that is movingly. He goes on to say:

> Until we express the ideas aesthetically, i.e., mythologically, they have no interest for the *people,* and conversely until mythology is rational the philosopher must be ashamed of it. Thus in the end enlightened and unenlightened must clasp hands, mythology must become philosophical in order to make the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make philosophers sensible (*sinnl[ich].*)11

Aside from the fact that this fits in with Hegel's rather implausible dream that he would make philosophy "speak German" and thus become available to ordinary people, it does point up his conviction that philosophical ideas must be expressed in a form that makes them aesthetically attractive (enjoyable). We may smile at the naiveté that enabled Hegel to think that *his* German made *his* ideas available to "the man in the street," but it at least bears witness to a laudable conviction that, if philosophers are content simply to spend their time talking to each other, they are wasting their time. Later in his career, of course, Hegel will contend that "there is also a form of spirit which again, from another point of view, is superior to emotional fantasy (*Phantasie des Gemüts*), because it is capable of bringing its content into free self-consciousness in a more penetrating universality and more necessary correlation (*Zusammenhang*) than is possible for art as such. I mean *philosophical thinking.*"12 This might very well seem to betoken a severe separation of the philosophical from the artistic form of expression. But he goes on to say:

Still, conversely this form [of spirit] is on the other hand so hampered by abstraction as to develop only in the element of thinking as mere ideal (*ideallen*) generalization, such that concrete man can now find himself compelled to express the content and the results in a concrete manner, steeped in

> (*durchdrungen*) emotion and intuition, fantasy and feeling, in order therein to have and to give total expression to the whole of his interior [life].
>
> 13

Hegel *could* be saying that, *in addition* to philosophical thinking we need artistic expression. But, he could alsoand more plausiblybe saying that unless philosophical thinking is both engaged in and expressed artistically (poetically), it is destined to be a dull and unrewarding game indeed, lacking in wholeness, failing to involve the whole person. In short, the merely prosaic philosopher is inevitably fragmentedand ineffective. Incidentally, what Hegel says much later in his career, *"Was vernünftig ist, ist wirklich,"* can be translated "What is rational is effective"also, it must be expressed effectively. This means, if nothing more, that philosophical expression must be able to overcome the resistance of the mediuman artistic task in this case the resistance of language to the expression of speculative truth, and this is a poetic task, high art indeed. More than that, the poetic expression of speculative thinking must in no way detract from the rigor of that thinking.

It is from this point of view that we can now turn to an examination of what in the concrete Hegel has done to philosophical expression. We can, I think, find in the description he gives of poetry's task what Hegel was trying to do in all his major works (whether or not he succeeded is another question).

> Thus in poetry the universal, the rational, is expressed not in an abstractly universal way and in philosophically demonstrated interrelationship or in the intelligible connection of its parts, but rather as vitalized, manifested, animated, all-determining, and yet at the same time expressed in a manner which lets the all-embracing unity, the very soul of the vitalization produce its effect (*wirken*) only secretly, moving from the interior to the exterior.14

What Hegel *looks for* in the true work of art is the organic unity so marvelously exemplified in the symphony with its dynamic ordering of diversified parts into one consistent whole. It is the kind of organic unity we find in Hegel's philosophical works, whether the work in question be the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* the *Science of Logic,* or even the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences.* These works may not be logically compelling to the logician of the "understanding"; they have a compelling power of their own for one who is willing to see them with aesthetic eyes and, thus,

to overcome prosaic fragmentation. In his philosophy Hegel seeks to express the rational, but the language in which he expresses it lifts it above mere formal rationality.

What Hegel has to say, then, in extraordinarily poetic fashion, about the "authentically poetic work of art" can, without stretching a point too much, be applied to his own artistic presentation of philosophical ideas.

> Thus, every authentically poetic work of art is a self-contained (*insich*) infinite organism. It is rich in content, and it unfolds this content in a presentation which is adequate to it. It is thoroughly unified, yet not in a form or with an end in view which abstractly swallows up the particular; rather each of its parts is knit together, with the same vibrant autonomy as is the whole, into complete harmony (*Rundung*) without apparent design. It is filled with the stuff of actuality and yet stands in no relationship of dependence either to this content and its empirical reality or to any particular sphere of life; rather it is free in its own self-determining creativity in giving to the concept of things the authentic form of its manifestation and in bringing what exists externally into reconciling harmony with its most interior essence.
>
> 15

I blush at my extremely unpoetic translation of what in Hegel's German is not only superbly poetic but even lyrical. This is Hegel's supremely artistic way of presenting to us his philosophy of art. All very subjective, we might say, but we must also say that what is subjectively important to a genius is objectively important to us. Here I should like to emphasize the rich imagery which some might like to suppose is foreign to philosophical writing. To select but a few of the images in the passage above: a true poem is *ein in sich unendlicher Organismus;* as such it comes across in regard to its content as *in entsprechender Erscheinung entfaltend;* each of its parts manifests the same *lebendige Selbständigkeit* as does the whole; thus both whole and parts are brought to *vollendeter Rundung;* at the same time it is *mit dem Stoffe der Wirklichkeit erfüllt;* and in regard to this it is *frei aus sich schaffend;* thus, it succeeds *den Begriff der Dinge zu seiner echten Erscheinung herauszugestalten;* this permits it *das äusserlich Existierende mit seinem innersten Wesen in versöhnenden Einklang zu bringen.* It might be objected that this is the sort of vivid imagery one could expect in a philosophy of art (if, indeed, this is for the most part true!), but only in a philosophy of art. The point, however, is that Hegel's writing is replete with this sort of vivid imagery. If in addition we are willing to admit that imagery need not be confined to what has a sensible content or a content that is always to the same degree sensible, then the imaginative character of

Hegel’s philosophical writing can be seen as considerably expanded. He himself gives warrant for this view of

imagery in what he has to say about the poetry of Scripture, of the “Poem” of Parmenides, or of the proverbs of Pythagoras (which, interestingly enough, he compares with the *Book of Proverbs.*)

16

One might, of course, wonder whether Hegel means what he says when he gives as examples of poetic utterances in Scripture such quotes as “God spoke, let there be light, and there was light” (where imagery applies not only to “light” but also to God’s “speaking”), or ”I am the Lord your God, you shall not have other gods than me,” where the imagery is more in the form of the utterance than in any sensible image the words call up. I myself am inclined to look upon Plato’s *Parmenides* as an exalted form of poetry, in its highly imaginative interweaving of logical argument, even though in it Plato makes no use of sensible imagery at all! One might also think of Spinoza’s *Ethics* as one extended metaphor for the interconnectedness of reality.

It is, of course, notorious that it is difficult to settle on any hard and fast criteria for saying what is and what is not poetry, precisely because poetry existed long before any rules for its composition were in existence: the rules are derived from poetry, not poetry from the rulesjust as logical thinking pre-exists the rules for it. By the same token, however, it is generally recognized as the function of poetical language that it be geared more to the eliciting of emotion than to the conveying of information. The question that needs to be asked here is the extent to which philosophical writing is geared to eliciting emotion; presumably its function is not to convey information! Is it supposed to make people excited? Does it say things that literally do make us want to say, “wow”? Assuming for the moment that it does, can we think of any philosophical language that does this more consistently than Hegel’s? It could be that we balk at calling this linguistic expression poetic; it would still be missing the point entirely not to recognize it as artisticand not simply the way prose can be artistic. Hegel is not the philosopher who, as I said before, puts a premium on being low-key. Philosophical thinkingor writingis geared to evoke a response, and the “yes” is neither mere emotion nor calculated assent; it is the involvement of my whole self.

There is, it would seem, a sense in which even Hegel himself recognized his philosophical task as a poetic task. In his view, as we have seen, the ultimate purpose of the artistic portrayal of beauty is the liberation of the human spirit, which is synonymous with spirit's coming to know itself as spirit, as self-creative, self-determining. But this, too, is the purpose of philosophical thinking. Each art has its own peculiar medium in which it seeks to create and express the beautiful, be that medium stone or wood or glass, marble or bronze, lines or pigments, bodily movements or sounds, or languageand it is the function of each, precisely as art, to create, not merely to imitate.

The medium is not the beauty, but without the medium there would be no beauty. We might go so far as to say that philosophical thinking is a thing of beauty, but one has to wonder just how much that is saying, if the language in which it is expressed is not beautifuland I seriously question whether exactness of language can ever be an adequate substitute for beauty of language. But, there is more to it than that: no work of art is a *work* if it is not individualized (given "a local habitation and a name"), whether as the Parthenon, the Apollo Belvedere, the Mona Lisa, the Ninth Symphony, the *Iliad, King Lear,* or the *Science of Logic.* Neither, however, will the work be a work of *art,* if what it expresses is not a universal concern of the human spirit. To accomplish the synthesis of universal concern and particular expression is indeed art. More than that, there is no *experience* of the work of art as a work of art, if it is not experienced aestheticallythere is no *scientific* experience of a work of art precisely as art; to experience the work of art as a work of art is itself an art. What I am trying to get at is that we have not experienced the work of art which is Hegel's philosophy if we have not experienced it aesthetically; and this is true, even if what we are experiencing is Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History.*

Here I should like to return to Hegel's contention that the goal of all artand supremely of poetic artis the expansion of the human spirit's (subjective, objective, and universal spirit) experience of itself, which means at once self-knowledge, self-revelation, and self-creation. But this, we know, is also the goal of speculative thinking. In all the knowledge it *seeks* the human spirit *finds* knowledge of itselfbut this is true too of both poetic creativity and poetic experience. To put this in another way: if there is one thread which is a constant in all of Hegel's philosophizing, it is the contention that what characterizes the human spirit in its concern for what is of supreme interest and importance is expressed in art, religion, *and* philosophy, not in philosophy alone. We find it in the *Phenomenology,* where the goal of "absolute knowing" is intelligible only when seen in continuity with art and religion; we find it in the *Science of Logic,* which he describes in his Introduction as "the presentation of God in his eternal essence before the creation of the world or of a finite spirit"; we find it in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,* where once again the philosophical quest is intelligible only as continuous with the artistic and the religious; we find it

in the elaboration of a philosophy of Absolute Spirit in the *Encyclopedia;* we find it explicitly in the Introduction to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* but also as a guiding thread throughout the lectures; we find it in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History;* we even find it in the *Philosophy of Right.* When we speak of continuity, of course, we are precluding a merely sequential

order, where religion would replace art, and philosophy would replace religion; rather we are speaking of interrelation wherein none is all that it is without the others, where each is revelatory of the human as authentically human.

The most obviously poetical of Hegel's works is, of course, the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* shot through as it is with poetic imagery, symbol, and metaphor (which may well be the reason why the *Phenomenology* receives such short shrift from prosaic-minded commentators), but imagery, symbol, and metaphor do not stop there. How else are we to comprehend the actualization of spirit's liberation in the movement which is history? How else are we to interpret the progressive elaboration of "the actual is rational and the rational is actual," so frequently misinterpreted by friend and foe of Hegel alike? What are we to say of the "march of spirit," where the pathway down (or up) which it "marches" is as important as is the goal toward which it moves? How are we to come to grips with a spirit that is all activity and never simply re-activity, which can be understood only as process? Just what can the "concrete universal" be if not a superbly poetic metaphor? What is Hegel saying when he tells us that "*speculative* thinking overcomes the lacunae of the understanding's mode of conceptualization and of the ordinary mode of seeing things and, as a result, stands from this point of view in closer kinship with poetic fantasy"?

17 To speak this way is, of course, to avoid the a priori concept of poetry which enables us to judge what is or is not poetry by measuring what is in question against a fixed criterion. Just as the criteria for true poetry are derived from existent poetry, which did not come into existence by *following* rules but by creating the very rules by which it is judged, so the great poet breaks the rules and, in so doing, creates rules for what is to follow. The same, it would seem, is true of the great philosopheror any great artistthe rules are there to be broken and superseded by new ones, without at the same time deviating from the "organic unity"which is itself, of course, a poetic metaphorof philosophical thought. Poetry, we might say, illustrates concretely the dialectical movement of spirit; when the same spirit moves dialectically in speculative thought it does not cut itself loose from its poetic moorings. The universal validity of great poetry is not so

very different from the universal validity of great philosophy; nor is either dependent on whether you or I accept it or agree with it.

It is perhaps in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* above all, that Hegel tells us in a vividly concrete way what philosophy is. It is pre-eminently *thinking,* but not thinking conceived of as a narrowly cognitive activity; it is thinking which is at the same time a "making" (ποιησις). It is like poetry in being self-contained; it is like poetry in

being at once spirit's self-manifestation and self-creation; it is like poetry in being creative of that which is supremely beautiful; it is like poetry in being an activity whose product is itself. Thus we can say that, for Hegel, in philosophy reason speaks in the language of speculative thought, and what it says is the same as what in religion it says using the language of metaphor or in poetry using the language of imagery. We can go further, however, and say that the language of speculative thought cannot simply dispense with the language of religious metaphor or the language of poetic imagery, if it is to express adequately what it has to expressand Hegel's philosophy is replete with religious and poetic imagery. This is but another way of saying that philosophy cannot dispense with emotion, not only in the sense that the human spirit's relation to truth is emotional but also in the sense that only when significant truth is allied to beauty is it genuinely compelling, because authentic philosophy is an activity of whole human persons, for which computers are no substitute. Not only does the fact that one *can* withhold one's assent to a truth say nothing with regard to the truth of it, but the absence of purely logical proof of that truth does not necessarily justify refusing to accept it. If, of course, we interpret Hegel's insistence on the "scientific" character of philosophical thought as meaning that it must be logically compelling in a narrow sense, then Hegel cannot be speaking of a thinking which is at once "scientific" and "poetic." But, it would, I submit, be a serious misreading of Hegel to insist that this is what he means by "scientific." To oppose "scientific" and "artistic/poetic" is to create a false dichotomy which Hegel's own work transcends (resolves). For Hegel philosophy was a pre-eminent human commitment to which every ounce of his considerable energy was dedicated (with enthusiasm and excitement), a commitment to comprehending what it is to be human and to holding up before society the image of what is thus comprehended so that society might discover whether it finds itself mirrored there, whether or not it finds that image "logically" compelling. One can, admittedly, be critical of Hegel in this regardnothing can be more fun than being critical of Hegel, like being critical of Platobut the likelihood is that in so doing one will reveal more about oneself and one's own foibles than about Hegel and his. This is not to say that either Plato or Hegel is above criticism; but it is to say that they are above the kind of criticism that is rooted in the insistence that philosophy must be drab, if it is to be truly philosophical. I, for my

part, should like to insist that philosophy is fascinating and not drab, not because it is an inconsequential game one can enjoy playing, but because it involves all that it is to be human. Philosophy is not a profession one is paid for practicing; it is a way of life one should be excited at engaging in. It is a way of being human

that must engage my whole self. Passion, excitement, commitment, caringall belong here. Is Hegel a good poet? The answer to that lies in the answer to the further question: Is Hegel the poet a good philosopher?

Notes

1. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Act 5, scene 1, 11.12 ff.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, "The Earliest SystemProgram of German Idealism," in *Hegel's Development: Toward the Sunlight,* 1770-1801 by Henry Harris (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1972) trans. Henry Harris, p. 511.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1970), 3:243 (hereafter cited as *VA*).

4. W. H. Auden, "For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio" in *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Random House, 1966). pp. 452-453.

5. Lee William Desmond, *The Owl of Minerva* (Volume 12, No. 4, 1981), p. 8.

6. *VA* 3: 280.

7. *VA* 3:280-81.

8. *VA* 3:230.

9. *VA* 3:232.

10. Hegel, *The Earliest System,* p. 511.

11. Ibid., pp. 511-12.

12. *VA* 3:437.

13. *VA* 3:437.

14. *VA* 3:241.

15. *VA* 3:270.

16. *VA* 3:250.

17. *VA* 3:243.

Chapter Two
The Historical Dialectic of Spirit: Jacob Boehme's Influence on Hegel

David Walsh

Despite ambiguities of attitude, the main lines of Hegel's conception of history are fairly clear. History is the temporal dimension in which absolute Spirit unfolds itself in order to arrive at knowledge of itself

[1] .The process has reached a culmination in that all-transparent self-consciousness represented by his own System of Science; this marks not only the fullest self-revelation of Spirit but truly its final self-actualization as well. Whether this meant that history had reached its end, or whether Hegel believed that a further elaboration was possible, was never made clear, and the question is probably largely irrelevant. The endless disputes of left-and right-wing Hegelians, along with the disagreements of an army of later exegetes, testify to its irresolvability. We must assume that the ambiguity is deliberate for the totality of Spirit is present in every stage and cannot properly be said to have a beginning or end, even if it is coextensive with world history.[2] Of more central concern is why Hegel believes history has such a structure in the first place. Why does he conceive of history as a dialectical movement toward that climax within time when its meaning can be penetrated as a whole? His answer would undoubtedly be that such a privileged moment is possible only when the reality underlying history has achieved its final self-realization, that is, when Spirit has emerged as Spirit. In order to understand the Hegelian conception of history, therefore, it is essential to compre-

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hend the identification of history with the self-unfolding of *Geist.* For the spiritual nature of history is intimately related to the historical nature of Spirit.

The roots of this view of history as a movement toward its own dialectical transcendence lie in Hegel's vision of the Spirit that is compelled to build itself forth in this way. That is the notion that stands in need of an explanation. Clearly it does not represent the God of Judaism or Christianity. Nor is it the Platonic or Neoplatonic One which, despite its emanationist character, ultimately embraces the whole of reality within itself. The links with Gnosticism are obvious for the fall of Spirit into the material world is the way toward recovery of the true identity of divine Being, and Hegel's construction is recognizable as a form of gnosis. But its proximate source lies much closer still. It is to be found pre-eminently in the theosophic Christianity of Jacob Boehme, the first truly modern mystic within the German tradition. Boehme is the creator of a radically new conception of God as the *ens manifestativum sui,* the being whose essence is to reveal itself. Beginning as an utterly indeterminate *Ungrund,* God must project separate creaturely realities outside himself in order to arrive at self-consciousness; it is only when his outgoing divine light encounters the opposition of self-willed independence that the revelation of God to himself takes place. This is almost the first occasion when the dialectic is both used in a dynamic evolutionary fashion and applied as a principle of explanation to the Godhead itself. From Boehme's self-opposing and self-revealing God, a direct line flows into the dialectically self-actualizing Spirit of Hegel's world history. Impressive evidence for this continuity is to be located in two principal sources: first, the enthusiastic endorsement of Boehme within Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie;* and second, the crucial role that Boehme's theosophic speculation played in the formation and subsequent elaboration of Hegel's conception of *Geist.*

I

It is dear from his express declarations on the subject that Hegel regarded the Silesian theosoph as, along with Francis Bacon, one of the two great fountainheads of modern philosophy. The debt of gratitude owed by all subsequent generations is forcefully stated in the chapter of his *Geschichte*

der Philosophie that he devotes entirely to Boehme's speculative mysticism.

> Jakob Böhme is the first German philosopher; the content of his philosophy is truly German. What characterizes Böhme and makes him noteworthy is the Protestant principle already

> mentioned, to place the intellectual world within one's own mind, and to contemplate and know and feel all that formerly was beyond in one's own self-consciousness. Böhme's universal idea shows itself, on the one hand, to be deep and grounded; but he does not, on the other hand, arrive, in all his need and struggling for determination and distinction in the unfolding of his divine intuition of the universe, at clarity and order.
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> 3

In the same spirit we may read the letter that Hegel wrote, thanking one of his former pupils for sending him an edition of Böehme's collected works. His eagerness to obtain a personal copy of the writings of the Reformation mystic is unmistakable.

> I can now study Jakob Böhme more closely than before, since I was not myself in possession of his writings. His theosophy is always one of the most remarkable attempts of a deep yet uneducated man to comprehend the innermost nature of the absolute Essence.For Germany he has the special interest of being the first German philosopher.In spite of the limited capacity of his time and his own limited training in thinking abstractly, his endeavor is the most serious struggle to bring the deep speculation which he had in his intuition into a representation, and at the same time to overcome the representational element so that the speculation could be expressed within it. As a consequence, there is very little that is stable and constant within it, since he always experiences the inappropriateness of the representation to what he wants and it is reversed again. Because of this a great confusion appears, since this reversing of the absolute reflection is without a definite consciousness and without the conceptual form. It would be difficult or, as it appears to me, impossible to sort out, apart from the recognition of the universal depth of his basic principles, what is going on with detail and exactness.4

These remarks reveal the excitement and admiration with which Hegel greeted the rediscovery of Böehme, and at the same time they reflect the profound reservations that he continued to hold concerning the incompleteness of the theosoph's achievements. Boehme had made the beginning, but it remained for Hegel to bring it to fulfillment. That ambivalence of attitude characterizes the treatment of his predecessor throughout.

Having roundly endorsed his spiritual ancestor, Hegel is always careful to establish a respectable distance from him. He does not himself want to be identified as a follower of Boehme, an "enthusiast," or "*Schwärmer*." Frequent use of the adjective "*barbarisch*" is designed

to demonstrate the crucial difference that separates them. Besides, the history of philosophy could not have achieved its end with an obscure seventeenth-century mystic when Hegel came to assign its definitive evolution almost 200 years later. We must be made aware of the essential shortcoming of Boehme, for "… he contemplates every concept in a reality; or he uses the reality as a conceptforceful, natural things and sensible properties to express his ideas, rather than determinations of the Notion [*Begriff*]."

5 Boehme is hindered in his understanding of the true nature of the Notion because of both the representational manner of the Christian religion and his own use of sensual categories (bitterness, astringency, fire, light, etc.) to express determinations of thought. As a consequence, his meaning is confused and there is no constancy of mind. The ideas all run together without a principle of order to guide them; expressions are forever changing and any attempt to give a coherent account of them would only delude itself.6

Yet such qualifications aside, when Hegel comes to the content of Boehme's speculation he is clearly a believer. The mystic undoubtedly illustrates the highest point of development for the representational mode of thought; his theosophy lies midway between representation and science as a kind of "speculative representation." The pictorial or representational mode can only apprehend the moments of the Notion as particular forms and events, such as good and evil, God and the devil. It regards God as the absolute Essence without comprehending how he contains all actuality, and especially evil, within himself. The highest achievement of which it is capable occurred in Boehme's attempt to contemplate the unity of these polarities within himself: to see how evil is present in good, and the devil in God.

> The basic idea for [Boehme] is the Striving to hold all in an absolute unitythe absolute divine unity, and the unification of all absolutes in God. His chief, one may even say his only thought, which goes through all, is in general the Holy Trinityto encompass the divine trinity in all, all things as its revelation and exposition. So that it is the universal principle in which and through which everything is: and indeed, such that all things have only this trinity in themselves, not as a trinity of the imagination, but reallythe absolute idea.7

Hegel had recognized the essentially triadic structure of Boehme's thought, and his subsequent exposition is organized around its three distinct moments: the unfolding of the Father's power, which comprehends itself in the Son and reveals itself as the outgoing divine Spirit.

The Father contains all qualities in a unity. He is the eternal "*Con-*

trarium" or "*Temperamentum*" in which all the differences are united and tempered. As such he is similar to the Neoplatonic One, containing all determinations in a hidden unity which is not revealed even to itself. It is significant that Hegel neither here nor elsewhere refers to Boehme's central symbol of the *Ungrund* for the divine origin, thereby indicating his own conviction that such a reality has no place in the movement of Spirit toward its proper self-actualization in the Notion. He confined himself to Boehme's description of the Father as the source of all powers. Within himself God contained all the powers that were later projected as the *Salniter,* or divine corporality, and eventually reflected throughout the whole of creation. Hegel mentioned the theosoph's description of these powers as seven spirit-sources (*Quell-Geister*), but failed to penetrate to the inner structure of their organization and regarded the account as a hopelessly confused depiction of their nature. He did however demonstrate an understanding of their fundamental nature, as constituting a unity in which each gives birth to all and "each in God is itself the totality."

8

The second person of the Trinity, the Son, is the revelation of the unknown Father. God as the simple and absolute Essence is not absolute God, since he does not even possess knowledge of himself. Boehme's achievement is to have recognized the inadequacy of this earlier conception of God as just such an empty abstraction. God, before he can be called God, must undergo a separation from himself through which he arrives at recognition of himself. This separation is the Son or Word, the revealer, the selfhood (*Ichheit*) and the source of all difference. A solitary will cannot have any knowledge of itself until it introduces a division into itself. Hegel quotes Boehme on the necessity for opposition in God's self-revelation.

> No thing can be revealed to itself without opposition [*Wiederwärtigkeit*]; for if there is nothing that opposes it, then it always goes out of itself and does not return again to itself. If it does not return into itself, as into that from which it originated, then it knows nothing of its origin.9

Hegel also repeats approvingly one of Boehme's later, more philosophical passages on the necessity for a No within the Yes, so that the One may be

revealed to itself.

> The reader should know that in Yes and No stand all things, whether divine, devilish, earthly or whatever it may be called. The One, as the Yes is an empty [*eitel*] power and life, and is the truth of God or God himself. He would be unknown in himself and there would be neither joy nor exaltation [*Erheblichkeit*] nor sensibility[life]within him without the

> No. The No is a projection of the Yes or truth [this negativity is the principle of all knowledge, understanding], so that the truth might be revealed and be something, wherein there is a *Contrarium* in which the eternal love might become active, sensible, willing and something to be loved.
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Hegel's interpretation, which is more skewed toward the parallels with his own System, does not make the same sharp distinctions that Boehme did between the different ways in which the Son, Lucifer, and creation are all different forms of opposition to the Father. The exposition tends to subsume the three of them under the one category of divine otherness. Thus Hegel described the Son as the divine gathering-together (*Sichsammeln*) to the point of being for itself, which is the source of all negativity and anger. He is the incomprehending or identity in which the will of the eternal One contemplates itself in a something, an "I-thing" or *Ichts*playing on the opposite of *Nichts* in the *Ich* of self-consciousness. Likewise, Lucifer, the first-born creature, is a source of *Ichts,* although in him the negative side of separation overcame the positive aspect of reflecting the divine light. Hegel regarded this as the greatest depth of Boehme's thought, to have apprehended the relationship between God and Lucifer and to have recognized evil as a moment in God's self-revelation.

> For the *Ichts*the self-knowing, I-ness [*Ichheit,* a word that occurs with him]is the forming of the self within the self, the imagining of the self within the self, the being for itself, the fire which consumes everything within it. This is the negative in the separator, the torment, or it is the *wrath* of God; this wrath of God is hell and the devil who, through himself, imagines himself into himself.11

The separation that forms the *Ichts,* therefore, is the force of selfhood that negates or separates all things from itself. Boehme's speculative insight has penetrated to the very essence of the unfolding absolute Spirit through the Notion.

> In fact Boehme has here descended into the whole depth of the divine Essence; evil, the material, or whatever it is called, is the I = I, the being for itselfthis is the true negativity. Formerly, it was the *non ens,* which is itself something positive, darkness; the true negative is the 'I'. It is not something wicked [*Schlechtes*] because it is called evil; it is in Spirit alone that evil is grasped as it is in itself.12

But the process of revelation cannot be completed until there is a reality

that is not so closely united with God as to be itself all light

(the Son), or so dosed off to the Father as to manifest only darkness (Lucifer), for there must be an independent reality that freely surrenders its self-will to reflect the divine light within itself. This is the justification for God's third self-unfolding into a world of separate creaturely existence. It is only within such a universe of independent finite individuals that the sevenfold structure of the divine powers are truly mirrored in an other and reflected to their eternal source.

This light, which is born in the Son and in created things, gives birth to the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit that returns to the Father again. The visible material world is the battleground where this struggle for manifestation takes place. Within every creature the two wills must contend with one another, the hard self-centering will with the loving self-sacrificing will, in order that the luminous divine essence of all things may stand revealed. The influence of selfhood or dark impressing must be eliminated before the Spirit can manifest itself within its true likeness. There the rebirth takes place in which the 'I', the hard contracting force of separation, is broken and "the painfulness is brought into true peaceas the dark fire breaks out into light"

13 . Within the larger divine-cosmic process, this dialectical conflict must be elaborated into its climactic expression for the reconciling divine love to be fully revealed; the fall of man in God's second creation was necessary for the redeeming love of Christ to be brought forth. Boehme only hints at this implication and Hegel does not discuss it here, although the parallels with his own System are unmistakable.14 For it is only when the dialectical unfolding has run its course that God's self-revelation as Spirit takes place: as that which separates itself from itself to return to itself again in an other. Such a God, Boehme concluded, does not exist in one body or place any more than in another. He is not an abstract Essence living in a remote heaven, but the birth of the divine Trinity takes place in everything and is to be found everywhere, especially in one's own heart. Hegel agreed that, even when you try to circumscribe a space, he is already there.

> In each spirit all are contained. This threeness is for [Boehme] the universal life in everything, the entire universal life in each thing and in each individual; it is the absolute substance.15

Clearly Boehme had made a profound impression on Hegel. No one can read the chapter in the *Geschichte der Philosophie* without recognizing that he took the theosophic speculation of this obscure Silesian mystic very seriously. Perhaps it was because very little modification was required to demonstrate the continuity of Boehme's mystical gnosis with Hegel's own System of absolute knowledge.

Indeed, as we uncover the similarity of their constructions, the suggestion becomes increasingly plausible that here we may have an important interpretative key to the inner structure of Hegel's thoughtor at least a more reliable guide than that provided by his treatment of most of the other thinkers of the past. Whatever the reason, the persistence of this continuity was well known among his contemporaries. Karl Rosenkranz was aware not only of the Boehme revival within Romantic and idealist circles, but also of a theosophic phase within Hegel's own development, as evidenced by several of the fragments that he preserved in his *Leben.*

16 Ferdinand Christian Baur, when he came to write his history of Christian gnosis, identified Hegel as only the most recent in a line of thinkers running back through Boehme to the ancient Gnostics.17 In contrast, contemporary scholarship, apart from one or two brief commentaries, has paid relatively little attention to the relationship between them.18 No doubt this is due in part to the difficulty and obscurity of Boehme's thought, but in much greater measure it must be attributed to the absence of any recognition of the importance of understanding the origins of symbols, especially as they undergo transformations of meaning. For while it is true that affinities with Hegel's dialectic may be found among such contemporaries as Goethe or Fichte, or even such predecessors as Cusa or Erigena, nowhere is the idea as fully elaborated as in Jacob Boehme.19 It is only in the latter that the dialectic within Spirit becomes a dynamically unfolding process of self-revelation. As a consequence, the question that must now be confronted becomes inescapable: Was the Silesian theosoph more than an historical forerunner that Hegel conveniently discovered after the fact? Was Boehme a major influence in the formation of Hegel's conception of *Geist?*

II

The strongest support for an affirmative response comes from the writings that remain from the early years at Jena, when the mature outline of Hegel's thought first began to take shape.20 Jena at this time had become the focal point for the German Romantic movement, and many of its greatest figures were assembled there, including Tieck, Novalis, Schelling, F. Schlegel, and A.W. Schlegel. Within that company an intense center of interest was

formed by their rediscovery of the German mystical tradition. For the first time the works of the great medieval and Reformation mystics were becoming widely available within their native land. The appearance of Eckhart and Boehme in particular was heralded as a liberating release from the deadness of Enlightenment rationalism. They read, too, the major eighteenth-century commentators of Boehme, the French Masonic writer, Louis

Claude de Saint-Martin, and the Swabian pietist theologian, Friedrich Christoph Oetinger, in whom they found a more contemporary application of the great mystical insights of the past. Of course, Schelling and Hegel had been exposed to these theosophic, mystical, and Hermetic traditions from their own Swabian heritage, but this was the first opportunity to undertake a direct prolonged study of the legendary spiritual masters for themselves.

21 Of particular importance in mediating this recovery of mysticism to the other Romantics and idealists was Franz von Baader. Having earlier come across Boehme, in 1787, he had decided to devote his considerable energies to the reconstruction of mytho-speculative theosophy as the basis for modem idealist philosophy,22 He collaborated closely in this task with Hegel, to whom he promised to dedicate a new edition of Boehme's works. They were engaged in a common endeavor, as Hegel later acknowledged, to bring the principles of religious forms that reached their highest self-consciousness in Boehme into full scientific clarity.23 For each recognized in the Silesian theosoph the solution to the central Romantic preoccupation: the means of uniting religion and science, spirit and nature, particular and universal, and finite and infinite.

In his early writings Hegel had, apart from an initial period of Kantian influence, arrived at a reconciliation of these tensions that was not too dissimilar from that of the other Romantics. It was based on his discovery of a quasi-mystical life or love, in which the finite and accidental dimensions of existence were completely sublated in their service of infinite and imperishable Being.24 But such an integration remained fundamentally incomplete. Hegel objected to any union whose inner necessity did not become transparent to finite experiencing consciousness, for it then continued as a merely given demand that imposed itself on the freedom of individual reason. Such was the impasse that both his own work and that of his contemporaries had reached, as he recognized shortly after his arrival at Jena.25 Yet, within a few brief years, the obstacles had been surmounted and the outline of Hegel's mature thought had become firmly established. What was it that accounted for his remarkable breakthrough? No doubt several

contributing factors can be identified, but one that has for too long been neglected is the influence of Jacob Boehme in pointing the way toward a resolution of the finite-infinite dichotomy of the Romantics. In his reading of the Silesian theosoph, Hegel could find the means of uniting the poles of the tension without diminishing either: finite contingent reality apprehended as an independent moment in the self-unfolding of infinite universal reality. That is, the central idea of God as a dialectical movement of self-revelation. From there, it only required a more thoroughgoing application of the theosophic symbolism to yield the final image of *Geist,* the World-Spirit

whose dialectical evolution achieves its own *self-actualization* as well. Hegel's struggle with these conceptions must be reconstructed from the traces that remain in the Jena writings.

First among these is a fragment in which he developed his notion of the Trinity as a process within God and within creation, "*Vom Gottlichen Dreieck*" (1804). It begins by declaring that "a more intelligible expression for the notion of God as the universal life is the term love; but a deeper one is Spirit."

26 This announcement indicates the beginning of Hegel's shift from the conception of the infinite as life or love to the understanding of it as self-mediating Spirit. He now conceived God in the same way as Boehme had, as constituted by a revelatory process in which he arrives at knowledge of himself through a self-unfolding in the Trinity and creation. Even the same language as Boehme's is used, for God is said to know himself as God only in the Son.

> In the Son God knows himself as God. He says to himself: I am God. The in-itself ceases to be negative. The separating and the sphere of God's self-consciousness is therein reconciled with his simplicity, and the kingdom of the Son is completely [one with] the kingdom of the Father. The self-consciousness of God is not a turning into itself and an otherness of the Son, just as it is not the otherness of that which turns into itself or of the simple Godhead, but the contemplation in the Son is [God's] contemplation of the latter as himself, yet so that the Son remains Son, as the inseparable and at the same time as the separate….27

Similarly, creation separated from God becomes evil, but united with him it becomes the means of his self-revelation.

> … the extended sphere of the universe which has no more being-for-itself opposing itself, but whose being-for-itself is a turning into itself in which God is present, which is God's turning into himself, a joy over the glory of the son whom he contemplates as himself. Thereby the earth also ceases to be a mixture for its being-in-itself is no longer pure being-for-itself which is evil.28

The mediator between Son and Father and between earth and Father is Spirit:

> For the sanctified earth this self-consciousness of God is the Spirit, who goes out from God and in which it [the earth] is one with him and the Son. This Spirit is here the eternal mediator between the Son who, having returned to the Father,

> is now wholly one, and the being of the Son in himself or the glory of the universe. The simplicity of the all-embracing Spirit has now entered into the center and there is no longer any separating, for the earth as the self-consciousness of God is rather the Spirit; yet it is also the eternal Son whom God contemplates in himself; and both are the one unity and knowledge of God in himself. Thus the sacred Trinity of trinities has closed itself.
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Hegel recognizes clearly, as Boehme also did, that the first Trinity of God in himself is not sufficient for the divine self-revelation. It is only "one side of the absolutely eternal Trinity, it is only the Godhead by itself in reciprocal contemplation and *recognition,"* which is characterized by the pure efflux and return of divine light.30 The second trinity of creation is essential for the self-contemplation to enter into an other and constitute itself within the full process of revelation.

> [God] has entered into relationship with evil [creation] and the medium is the abomination of the mixture of the two…. but it must be converted into its opposite, the Son must go through the earth, to overcome the evil, and when he appears as victor on one side he awakens in the other the self-recognition of God, as a recognition of its new unity with God, or as the Spirit of God. Thereby the medium becomes a beautiful divine medium, the universe of God.31

The same trinitarian construction can be seen extended through the separate realities of the universe, as they progressively reveal the one divine light pervading all things. "What was only a mixture is through the Spirit absolutely one with God and, as he recognizes himself in it, so it recognizes itself in God."32

This conception of nature and of God's self-revelation through it is elaborated at greater length in one of Hegel's extended aphorisms from the same period. Again the symbolism is distinctively Boehmean, especially the characterization of nature as the negative or evil when separated from God; by itself it represents the destructive force of God's wrath and the corruption caused by Lucifer's arrogant revolt.

> God, having turned to nature and expressed himself in the pomp and dull revolution of its forms, became aware of his expansion, of the lost point of separation, and became angry over it. Wrath is this formation, this compaction into an empty point. He finds himself in this way, with his essence poured out into the ceaseless and restless infinity, where there is no present but an empty rushing-out beyond a limit, which always remains even as it is transcended…. The anger of

> God, here fixed outside himself in his otherness, the fallen Lucifer, raised himself up against God and his beauty made him arrogant. Nature, through consciousness of its own form, brought it to contemplation and flattered itself over it.
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> 33

Such a construction applies pre-eminently to man, for it has its origin in the soul's experience of alienation and separation from the divine source. Our self-consciousness is precisely this self-centering "… which is immediate absolute activityit is wrath itself, the enkindling, the enkindling of wrath within it which wears itself out and consumes its arrogant pomp."34 The reconciliation required by this angry self-assertiveness consists in enduring the pain of not being the totality, so that the self whose desire has been purified becomes a transparent revelation of its highest spiritual form.

> The consumed nature rises upward in a newer, more ideal form, like a realm of shadows that has lost its first life, the appearance of its spirit after the death of its life. This new spirit is, however, the overcoming of the evil, the endurance of the glowing of the pain in the center point, where as purified it leaves all the flakes behind in the crucible, a residuum, which is the pure nothingness. It raises itself as a freer spirit that sees its radiance only in nature.35

Up to this point in the fragment, Hegel has done little more than summarize the theosophic Christianity developed by Boehme. Left in that form it would fail to satisfy his search for a complete integration of finite and infinite Spirit, since individual consciousness is related to the process by a mere intuition that ultimately accepts the structure as something given. There is still no grasp of the inner necessity for such a structure. This is precisely the criticism that Hegel went on to make in the following paragraph, which he began by characterizing the previous constructions as "the intuitions of barbarians." He objected that the form of intuition in which the unity is apprehended "denies the individual or is rather the wrath against this developed, self-subsistent absolute [the individual]."36 It is unable to recognize that this process of the self-externalization and self-reconciliation of Spirit, this life-course of God, has come from the knowing self in whom it has been articulated. The individual himself is *both* the self-expression of Spirit in nature and the return of Spirit to itself from its objectification.

> And [this process] is not only the elevation of the individual up to it or his education; it is not

merely an appearance from his side, a relationship to it. But the second revolution of the absolute itself which, having become Spirit, as emergent totality,

> as Spirit, as consciousness, goes as much into that pain, so that the Spirit as consciousness of it might produce its own development as something which has come forth for itself.
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> 37

In other words, the theosophic process of God's self-revelation, as elaborated by Boehme, needs to be completed by an application of its principles to the revelatory consciousness itself. The individual who experiences it must grasp the necessity for the separation between his own finitude and the unfolding Infinite of his knowledge; through its acceptance he can overcome the distinction, to reveal his knowing self as the source of its own content.

> This intuition of religion is universal religion and is this only as science…. Knowing makes every moment of the intuition, which for itself is an impenetrable determinate form, that does not disclose its innerness to itself but goes forth, acts and disappears through another actor, into a process in itself or into a spiritual nature.38

There, within the space of a brief transition, we have arrived, *mirabile dictu,* at Hegel's mature concept of Spirit. The last of the troubling dualisms of the age has been overcome as finite consciousness recognizes itself as the essential medium for the return of Spirit to itself as Spirit. No doubt this discovery was to undergo an extensive and complex elaboration within Hegel's later works, but the key to the entire construction remains the influences that originally shaped its formation during the years at Jena. Prominent among these must be ranked the theosophic speculation of Boehme. It provided Hegel with the pivotal insight into the resolution of the fundamental dichotomies of existence: the positive significance of the negative. Once the necessity for separation, distance, and otherness has been recognized, its character as negative disappears in a transcending unity that embraces all. This understanding of Spirit as a dialectical self-constitution through the comprehension and sublation of the oppositions within reality, continued to shape the abiding structure of Hegel's thought. For, despite the obvious intellectualization and radicalization of the conception in his hands, the unfolding of his idea of *Geist* still bears traces of its theosophic lineage. Indeed, the admiration Boehme commanded remained so constant that Hegel regularly acknowledged the debt he owed throughout the later works, by reverting to the language of Boehme to

amplify his explanation of various points and by explicitly referring to the Silesian theosoph as one of the authoritative guides to his own speculative enterprise. Acknowledgements of the first kind are to be found particularly in the *Phänomenologie* and those of the second in the System of Science.

In the *Phänomenologie,* Hegel's use of such terms as "element," "aether," "expansion," "contraction," etc., which have their roots in the pansophy and nature mysticism of his Swabian background, is well known. While these may have come to him through Boehme, the latter's influence is most apparent when Hegel is describing evil as a moment in the self-alienation of Spirit, as, for instance, in the climactic emergence of Spirit in his chapter 6, when the individual becomes conscious of his immediate unity with universal Spirit.

> Both aspects [individual and universal] are purified into the unity in which there is no longer in them any existence devoid of self, any negative of consciousness, where, on the contrary, *duty* is the unchanging identical character of its self-knowledge, and *evil* equally has its purpose in its *being within itself,* and its actuality in its utterance.
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> 39

But the truly unmistakable testimony to Boehme occurs in the following chapter when Hegel comes to deal with the consciousness of Spirit within the different religious forms. There the depiction of natural religion draws heavily on Boehme's image of the original divine light, streaming forth without self-revelation and yet combining the polarities of fire and light.40 The most elaborate treatment is naturally reserved for the form of revealed religion, which is from start to finish identical with the theosophic Christianity of Boehme. As the highest development of Christianity, this variant emphasizes the Godhead as a trinitarian process of self-generation, rather than a Trinity of Persons. Nature is a further unfolding of God's self-revelation, and when separated from the divine source it must be regarded as evil.

> Similarly, Nature is *nothing apart from* its essence; but this same 'nothing' just as much is; it is an absolute abstraction, and thus pure thought or being-within self, and with the moment of its antithesis of the spiritual unity it is Evil.41

As a consequence the Fall may be traced back to the moment of creation, when the self-subsistent individual first became conscious of his self-centering otherness.

> It can therefore be said that it is the very first born Son of Light [Lucifer] who fell because he withdrew into himself or became self-centered, but that in his place another was at once created.42

But this is also the beginning of reconciliation, and the highest achievement of representational thought is to have recognized it: to grasp evil as a moment within God himself. Hegel virtually quotes Boehme in his admiration of the capacity of this form to apprehend evil as the wrath of God.

> Picture-thinking takes the other aspect, evil, to be a happening alien to the divine Being; to grasp it in the divine Being *as the wrath of God*, this demands from picture-thinking, struggling against its limitations, its supreme and most strenuous effort, an effort which, since it lacks the Notion, remains fruitless.
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> 43

From this perspective redemption is identical with the fallthe Incarnation is only a later more explicit repetition of God's self-alienationand Hegel is unafraid to draw out the final implication at which Boehme could only hint: the necessity of evil. Withdrawal into self-centered consciousness is already the first step in redemption.

> For as a withdrawal into itself from the immediacy of Nature which is determined as evil, it is a forsaking of that immediacy and a dying away of sin. It is not natural existence as such that is forsaken by consciousness, but natural existence that is at the same time known as evil.44

Hegel is even more generous in the regular acknowledgments of Boehme in the later System of Science. Repeatedly the theosoph is called upon to explain the peculiarly positive dynamic of the negative, as in this passage from the *Logik* on the development of qualities.

> Qualification or 'inqualification', an expression of Jakob Böhme's [thought], a philosophy which goes deep but into a murky depth, signifies the movement of a quality (astringency, bitterness, fieriness, etc.) in itself, insofar as it posits and establishes itself in its negative nature (in its torment or *Qual*) from out of an other and in general its unrest in itself, by means of which it brings itself forth and maintains itself only through a struggle.45

In the *Naturphilosophie,* the necessity of the fall for the development of man's knowledge and the character of nature as the otherness or evil projection of God, are both fully expounded. Along the same lines, nature and Lucifer may each be regarded as different stages within God's dialectical self-realization, as Boehme had recognized.

> Nature is the negative because it negates the Idea. Jacob Böhme says that God's first birth is Lucifer, this creature of light having centered his imagination on himself and become evil; this is the moment of difference, of otherness held in love. Representations such as this, which have a free rein in orientalized taste, have their ground and significance in the negative nature of nature.46

It is because of this dynamic negative quality of nature that the question of

the beginning of the world cannot be settled, for it is impossible

to conceive of God as God before the existence of a world of finite otherness. This understanding of God is emphasized in a characteristically Boehmean formula.

> God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, a self-consciousness in man and man's knowledge *of* God, which proceeds to man's self-knowledge *in* God.
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> 47

The divine self-expression in nature is then examined by Hegel in more detail, liberally interspersed with references to the parallel constructions in Boehme and Paracelsus.48

From the unfolding of Spirit in nature, we are led of course to its self-elaboration within that other dimension of history. For, "World history as a whole is," as Hegel observes, "the expression of the Spirit in time, just as nature is the expression of the Idea in space."49 It is within this application to history that the full significance of the theosophic divinity becomes apparent: the necessary structure of history in its movement toward the dialectical self-realization of Spirit.

> It has already been shown and will again emerge in the course of our inquiry that the history of the world is a rational process, the rational and necessary evolution of the world Spirit. This Spirit [is] the substance of history; its nature is always one and the same; and it discloses this nature in the existence of the world.50

The time for such a knowledge of the whole of history has, moreover, arrived, now that the meaning of its final phase, Christianity, has been definitively penetrated by philosophy. Once that has occurred, a qualitative transformation has taken place. Nothing of the darkness, evil, and irrationality of history now remains, for their necessity has been fully comprehended and thereby transcended in an ultimate theodicy or justification of the ways of God to man.51 The theosophic conception of evil as the other side of God's wrath has reached its fullest elaboration. This is the sense in which Hegel's dictum that "the rational is real and the real is rational" is to be understood. Philosophy is the means of reconciling the irrationality of existence to the rationality of reality within the dialectical self-realization of Spirit.

What is usually called reality is seen by philosophy as no more than an idle semblance which has no reality in and for itself…. Philosophy, therefore, is not really a means of consolation. It is more than that for it transfigures reality with all its apparent injustices and reconciles it with the rational; it shows that it is based on the Idea itself, and that reason is fulfilled in it.[52]

By the time Hegel had reached the end of his *Philosophie der Geschichte,* the contemplative transfiguration of history had occurred. As an achievement it had been made possible in large part by the theosophic recognition of the positive role of evil in the unfolding dialectic of Spirit. No doubt other influences were at work in the development of this notion, but few rivaled Boehme's insight into the dynamic self-revelatory process within the Godhead. Certainly none came as close to prefiguring Hegel's own evolutionary dialectic of Spirit. The demonstration of that continuity of influence has been the primary object of the present study, and if it has succeeded in some measure, a *prima facie* case has been established for regarding the Hegelian *Geist* in a new light. Besides its immediate relationship with the problems of Kantian and Fichtean epistemology, it clearly has rather profound affinities with the theosophic divinity of Boehme, and the latter affiliation may well prove to have been most decisive in determining its final shape. For those who have read the Silesian mystic, the continuities appear unmistakable. Hegel simply represents a more relentless application of the unfolding dialectic, to include the knowing subject as well. The root inspiration is essentially the same as that which underpins the theosophic construction of Boehme: a projection from the necessity for opposition and its overcoming in the development of man's self-consciousness to the assertion of precisely the same conditions in the achievement of God's self-consciousness. The pride of human self-extrapolation is truly the constant.

Notes

1. This vast conglomeration of volition, interests and activities is the sum total of instruments and means which the world spirit employs to accomplish its end, to make this end conscious and to give it reality; and its end is simply that of finding itself, of coming to terms with itself, and of contemplating its own actuality (G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* trans. H. B. Nisbet, *Introduction: Reason in History* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975], p. 74 [hereafter cited as *Reason in History*]; idem, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte,* ed. J. Hoffmeister [Hamburg: Meiner, 1955] p. 87 [hereafter cited as *Vernunft in der Geschichte*]).

2. Within the Idea, even that which appears to be past is never lost. The Idea is of the present, and the Spirit is immortal; there is no past or future time at which it did not or would not exist; it is not over and done with, nor does it not yet existon the contrary, it exists absolutely now. This in fact means that the present world and the present form of self-consciousness of the spirit contain within them all the stages which appear earlier in history (*Reason in History,* p. 150; (*Vernunft in der Geschichte,* p. 182).

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke Jubiliämausgabe,* ed. Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1928), vol. 19, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie,* p. 300 (hereafter cited as *Geschichte der Philosophie*). Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

4. Hegel, *Briefe yon und an Hegel* vol. 1, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), pp. 381-2. Hegel received the copy on 4 July 1811, while he was at Nürnberg. See note 1 to this letter.

5. *Geschichte der Philosophie,* p. 301.

6. Ibid., p. 304.

7. Ibid., pp. 304-5.

8. Ibid., p. 312. On Boehme's "systematic" exposition of the seven qualities, see Hans Grunsky, *Jacob Böhme* (Stuttgart: Fromann, 1956).

9. *Geschichte der Philosophie,* p. 313. The quotation comes from J. Boehme, *Sämtliche Schriften,* ed. Will-Erich Peuckert (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1955-61) *Vom Göttlicher Beschaulichkeit,* vol. 4, ch. 1, par. 8. This edition is only slightly different from the 1715 edition that Hegel possessed.

10. *Geschichte der Philosophie,* pp. 319-20; Boehme, *Sämtliche Schriften,* vol. 9, *Betrachtung Göttlicher Offenbarung,* Q.3, par.2.

11. *Geschichte der Philosophie,* pp. 316-7.

12. Ibid., p. 317.

13. Ibid., p. 327.

14. For outside of this [pain and torment] the knowledge of the eternal One would not be revealed and there would be no joy; and even if it were in being it would not be revealed to itself. Thus it reveals itself by introducing itself into nature through the separability of its speaking, by which the speaking introduces itself into properties and the properties into conflict. So through conflict the eternal Good, which introduces itself by the speaking Word into separability, becomes separate, creaturely and representable

(*bildlich*) For if there were no evil, then good would not be known (Boehme, *Sämtliche Schriften,* vol.8, *Mysterium Magnum,* ch.71, pars.16-17.

15. *Geschichte der Philosophie,* p. 323.

16. Karl Rosenkranz, *G. W. F. Hegels Leben* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1844).

17. Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis* (Tübingen: Osiander, 1835).

18. Ingrid Schüssler, "Boehme and Hegel", *Jahrbuch der schlesischen Friedrich Wilhelms Universität* 10 (1965): 45-58; T. Goedewaagen, "Hegel und der Pantheismus", *Hegel-Studien* 6 (1971): 171-87; Ernst Benz, "Die Mystik in der Phi1osophie des deutschen Idealismus," *Euphorion* 46 (1952): 280-300; Werner Schultz, "Der Einfluss des deutschen Mystik auf Hegels Philosophie," in W. Schultz, *Theologie und Wirklichkeit* (Kiel: Lutherische Verlagsgesellschaft, 1969).

19. Gerhard Bartsch, "Zur Geschichte der Dialektik im älteren deutschen Pantheismus (Vom Cusanus his Böhme)," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 16 (1968): 593-604. For an interpretation of Boehme within the context of his impact on modem intellectual history, see D. Walsh, *The Mysticism of Innerworldly Fulfillment: A Study of Jacob Boehme* (Gainesville: University Presses of Florida, 1983).

20. The best guide to the period is the work of Heinz Kimmerle, especially his *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens, Hegels "System der Philosophie" in den Jahren 1800-1804* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Grundmann, 1970), which acknowledges the influence of Boehme on Hegel at this time; idem, "Zur Chronologie von Hegels Jenaer Schriften," *Hegel-Studien* 4 (1967): 125-76; idem, "Die von Rosenkranz überlieferten Texte Hegels aus der Jenaer Zeit," *Hegel-Studien* 5 (1969): 83-94.

In contrast, Helmut Schneider and Wolfgang Bonspien disagree that Boehme was a significant influence. Schneider, "Anfänge der Systemen-twicklung Hegels in Jena," *Hegel-Studien* 10 (1975): 133-71; Bonspien, *Der Begriff der Negativität in den Jenaer Schriften Hegels* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Grundmann, 1977). Their objections, however, are based entirely on Hegel's criticisms of Boehme's language, and fail to take account of his simultaneously positive assessment of the theosoph. Hege1's attitude toward Boehme was fundamentally ambivalentaccepting the structure of a dialectic of Spirit, but rejecting its theosophic formulation.

21. For these developments in general, see Ernst Benz, *Les sources mystiques du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Vrin, 1968); Robert Schneider, *Schellings und Hegels schwäbische Geistesahnen* (Würzburg: Tiltsch, 1938); Reiner Heinze, *Bengel und Oetinger als Vorläufer des deutschen Idealismus* (diss., University of Münster, 1969); Günther Rohrmoser, "Zur Vorgeschichte der Jugendschriften He gels," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 14 (1960): 182-208.

On Schelling, see the excellent recent study by Robert Brown, *The Later Philosophy of Schelling; The Influence of Boehme on the Works of 1809-1815* (Lew-isburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977); E. Benz, *Schellings theologische Geistesahnen* (Wiesbaden: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1955); idem, *Schelling, Werden und Wirken seines Denkens* (Zurich: Rhein-Verlag, 1955).

22. If I here call our "Philosophus Teutonicus" the reformer of religious philosophy I do it in anticipation of a not too distant future, and I wish to emphasize that the writings and principles of Jacob Boehme will be of excellent service in that purely philosophical reform. I would like to

convince at least a few competent minds that, from what is becoming more precise in the contemporary idealist movement of German philosophy, it will no longer be possible for any but the ignorant to ignore his writings (Franz von Baader, *Sämtliche Werke,* ed. Franz Hoffman *et al.* (Leipzig: Bethmann, 1851-55), 2:199. Quoted in Benz, *Les sources mystiques,* p. 20.

23. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke,* 8:21-22.

24. To love God is to feel oneself in the "all" of life, with no restrictions, in the infinite. In this feeling of harmony there is no universality, since in a harmony the particular is not in discord but in concord, or otherwise there would be no harmony…. Love is a sensing of a life similar to one's own… Only through love is the might of objectivity broken…. Love alone has no limits (Hegel, *Theologische Jugendschriften,* ed. Nohl [Tübingen: Mohr, 1907], p. 296; idem, *Early Theological Writings,* trans. T. M. Knox [Chicago: University, of Chicago Press, 1948; reissued, Philadelphia, 1972], p. 247.)

25. Hegel, *Differenz des Fichte'schen und Schelling'schen Systems der Philosophie Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 4, ed. H. Buchner and O. Pöggeler (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968)

26. Hoffmeister, ed., *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1936; reissued, 1974), p. 304.

A series of drawings containing a triangular speculation on the nature of reality may also have accompanied this fragment. If the symbols were not directly influenced by Boehmeand there are many such examples in his *Sämtliche Schriften*they clearly indicate Hegel's involvement with the Hermetic-Cabbalist-alchemical traditions from which the theosoph emerged. For a discussion, see Helmut Schneider, "Zur Dreiecks-Symbolik bei Hegel," *Hegel-Studien* 8 (1973): 55-77.

On Hegel's relation to alchemy, Karin Figala, "Der alchemische Begriff des *Caput Mortuum* in der symbolischen Terminologie Hegels," in *Stuttgarter Hegel-Tage 1970,* ed. H. G. Gadamer (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Grundmann, 1974), pp. 141-51.

27. Hoffmeister, *Dokumente,* p. 304. Compare with Boehme's observation: "The Father is called a holy God only in the Son (that is in the power of light in the divine joy-kingdom, as in the great gentleness and love), for that is his true revelation within which he is called God *Schriften,* vol.7, *Mysterium Magnum,* ch. 7, par.14).

28. Hoffmeister, *Dokumente,* p. 304.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., p. 305. Compare with Boehme:

For if there were only one will then all beings would constitute only one thing, but in opposition each raises itself in itself for its victory and exaltation. And in this conflict stands all life and growth, and thereby the divine Wisdom is revealed and comes in a formation to contemplation and to joyousness: since in overcoming [*Überwindung*] there is joy but a single will is not revealed to itself, for there is neither evil nor good in it, neither joy nor sorrow (*Schriften,* vol. 7, *Mysterium Magnum,* ch. 11, par. 8).

32. Hoffmeister, *Dokumente,* p. 305.

33. Ibid., pp. 364-5.

34. Ibid., p. 365.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., p. 366.

38. Ibid. See also the similarly complimentary and critical references to Boehme in Aphorism 45, 363-4, and the "Jenenser Vorlesungen," pp. 338-9.

39. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes,* ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 471; idem, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 408.

40. *Phänomenologie,* p. 484; *Phenomenology,* p. 419; Jean Louis Vieillard-Baron, *"La* 'religion de la nature:' Étude de quelques pages de la *Phénomenologie de l'Esprit* de Hegel," *Revue de metaphysique et de morale 76* (1971).

41. *Phänomenologie,* p. 543; *Phenomenology,* p. 473.

42. *Phänomenologie,* p. 538; *Phenomenology,* p. 468. See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion,* ed. Lasson (Hamburg: Meiner, 1927), vol.2,

pt.3, pp. 94-5, for an acknowledgment of Boehme as the source of these ideas.

43. *Phänomenologie,* p. 539; *Phenomenology,* p. 470.

44. *Phänomenologie,* p. 544; *Phenomenology,* p. 474.

45. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke,* vol.4, *Wissenschaft der Logik,* p. 129.

46. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke,* vol.9, *System der Philosophie II, Die Naturphilosophie,* par.248; *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature,* trans. M. J. Petty (New York: Humanities Press, 1970) 1:211. See also *Naturphilosophie,* pars. 246, 247.

47. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke,* vol. 10, *System der Philosophie III, Die Philosophie des Geistes,* par. 564; *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind,* trans. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), par. 564.

48. *Naturphilosophie,* pars. 280, 283, 284, 368.

49. Hegel, *Vernunft in der Geschichte,* p. 154; *Reason in History,* p. 128.

50. *Vernunft in der Geschichte,* p. 30; *Reason in History,* p. 29.

51. It should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the world, including the existence of evil, so that the thinking Spirit may be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence; and it is in world history that we encounter the sum total of concrete evil…. A reconciliation of the kind described can only be achieved through knowledge of the affirmative side of history, in which the negative is reduced to a subordinate position and transcended altogether (*Vernunft in der Geschichte,* p. 48; *Reason in History,* pp. 42-3.

52. *Vernunft in der Geschichte,* p. 78; *Reason in History,* p. 67.

Comment, by Eric von der Luft

Professor Walsh has built his case for Boehme's influence on Hegel around four main bits of evidence: (1) Hegel's testimonial to Boehme, published posthumously in two distinct versions by Karl Ludwig Michelet in the two separate redactions of Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy;* (2) Hegel's letter of July 29, 1811, thanking Peter Gabriel van Ghert for the gift of Boehme's works; (3) two fragments from Hegel's Jena period, one an essay on the Trinity, the other an aphorism on spirit; and (4) certain thematic similarities between Boehme and the Hegel of the *Phenomenology, Logic, etc.*

Of these four indications, the third, the Jena writing, can offer Walsh the best support. Hegel's triplicity of trinities, that is, the double trinity's two poles unified in God to form a third trinity,

1 has an amazingly direct analogy to one of Boehme's most important concepts, that of the three principles unifying the seven qualities.2 Boehme's first three qualities form his first trinity, from which, through nature connecting with God, the fourth quality flashes like lightning, giving rise to the fifth, which, together with the sixth and seventh, form the second trinity. These two trinities, as the first two principles, produce the third principle, and all three together constitute the Godhead. Similarly, Hegel in the Jena fragment describes the Godhead as the eternal, abstract, otherworldly in-itself, that is, the Father, which changes over into its incursion into the world, that is, the Son, both united as their eternal, concrete mediation, that is, the Holy Spirit.3 Surely Walsh has correctly perceived the positive influence of Boehme on Hegel here. But in this essay Hegel was only experimenting, only testing the philosophical logic of what areadmittedlyBoehmean ideas. Later in his career, Hegel explicitly re-

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jected Boehme's treatment of this issue, both in the *Phenomenology* and in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion.*

4

The same argument, *mutatis mutandis,* applies to the Jena paper on spirit. After summarizing Boehmean thought on an aspect of God's revelation, Hegel rejects this approach in much stronger language than Walsh suggests: "Such myths, such views, are the views of *barbarity.* The configuration of these views annihilates the individual, or rather, at this point there is a fury against this accomplished, persistent, self-renewing absolute. The individual is nothing in this configuration."5 Because mythologized religion, theosophic religion, a religion of nature, tends to lose the individual in contemplation of an infinite or transcendent beyond, Hegel, for whom the rational individual is the ultimate locus of spirit, and especially of free spirit, has no choice but to reject such religion and to substitute for it a knowledge that both explains and includes the full richness of this individual developed from spirit as consciousness. If Boehme had any major effect upon Hegel's idea of spirit as portrayed in this fragment, it seems to be only insofar as Hegel regarded thought such as Boehme's as inferior to his own, or insofar as Hegel was thus able to use the visionary mystic as a straw man to help make his point about the free spirit of the individual.

The remaining three pieces of evidence may just as well work against Walsh's case as for it. First of all, the sections on Boehme in the Michelet volumes are open to a wide variety of interpretations. Walsh, for instance, reads the 1833 edition as praising Boehme. The 1840 edition, however, shows that this praise is marked by ambiguity, as when Hegel is represented as claiming that with Boehme "philosophy first appeared in Germany with a character peculiar to itself."6 Second, the sender of a thank-you note is most unlikely to insult therein the gift which he is acknowledging, even if he really does not like it. Finally, those themes in the later Hegel which are perhaps traceable back to Boehme are also traceable, and more readily so, further back, to Eckhart,7 Erigena, Proclus, and Plotinus.

This last point is most important, for Walsh has identified Boehme as part of a tradition that goes at least as far back as the Gnostics. But because Boehme was poorly educated, and thus almost wholly unaware of his cultural and ideological predecessors, he really could not have been a *member* of any tradition; rather, he was the true *founder* of a tradition, the tradition of nature-mysticism, which continued with the English Boehmenists (William Law), Quakers (George Fox), the German romanticists (Schelling and Novalis), and English romanticists (Coleridge and Wordsworth).[8] Even though Boehme had a mentor, Martin Moller, the local pastor who was well schooled in Augustine, Tauler, Thomas á Kempis, Bernard of Clairvaux, etc.,[9]

Boehme's borrowing from Moller was not so much in the content of his thought as in the means of its expression.

10 Above all, Boehme was an *independent* thinker.

While I do not deny the existence in Boehme's works of those ideas that Walsh claims Hegel derived from Boehme, and While I also do not deny that Hegel may well have read them there, let us still mention some earlier, more classical, more strictly philosophical, and thus, for Hegel, more likely sources of these ideas. For example, Walsh claims in the abstract of his paper that Boehme chiefly contributed to Hegel "the idea of a dialectical self-unfolding of Spirit: that God becomes God only through a process of self-revelation." But this is a standard Neo-Platonic idea, finding expression in Proclus (*The Elements of Theology,* Prop. 23), where the One must give of itself or else lack honor and fertility, (Prop. 25) where the One is equated with the Good, which must generate manifolds in order to achieve its own completeness, and in John Scotus Erigena (*On the Division of Nature,* Book 1), who, describing his envisioned dialectic of spirit, says, "The name *God* is applied not only to the Divine Essence, but also, as frequently in sacred Scripture, to that way in which He shows Himself, in some manner to intellectual and rational creatures, to each according to his capacity."11 "I did not say that God moves outside Himself, but from Himself, in Himself, towards Himself."12 Accordingly, Walsh's idea that "God, before he can be called God, must undergo a separation from himself through which he arrives at recognition of himself," which he attributes to Boehme, is a nearly perfect characterization of Erigena's dialectic in which God proceeds from Himself as uncreated creator, through his self-manifestations as created creators and created noncreators, and returns to Himself, thus realizing and fulfilling Himself as Himself, as the uncreated who does not create because He then no longer needs to create. Nor is Boehme the real originator of what Walsh calls "a radically new conception of God as the *ens manifestativum sui,* the being whose essence is to reveal itself," for this conception is found in Plotinus (*Enneads,* vol. 5, bk. 1, sec. 10, p. 6), where God, as the One which *must* emanate, causes its essence, which is to reveal itself, to do so, as perfumes reveal their aromas. Boehme's recognition that

evil is, in Walsh's words, "a moment in God's self-revelation," is just standard Plotinian theodicy, where evil is the outermost extreme of the emanative dialectic, matter conceived as a negative factor, *when* the soul turns toward it, away from the One, instead of remaining faithful to its ultimate source, and directly *before* the soul realizes the sterility of this choice, and initiates its epistrophic dialectic.[13] Surely it was not alone "the theosophic speculation of Boehme…. [which] provided Hegel with the pivotal insight into the resolution of the fundamental dichotomies of existence: the po-

sitive significance of the negative," as Walsh claims, since the *locus classicus* of the positive use of the negative is the apophatic theology of the Pseudo-Dionysius, who probably derived this idea from the cosmology of Proclus and Plotinus.

How did Boehme's thought come to be so full of these Neo-platonic ideas, if Boehme had never read them? To answer this question, we must first grant that Boehme was a singularly brilliant thinker. Hence, we may conjecture that, just as a clever college freshman, with no previous knowledge of Aristotle, is quite capable of developing an ethics which has an uncanny resemblance to the Nicomachean variety, so Boehme, with only vague apprehensions, through his church, of his true theological heritage, was able to experience and develop independently many of the truths of this heritage. And like our freshman, Boehme lacked the well-reasoned technical vocabulary which would have allowed him to express his insight more clearly and consistently. Poor Boehme saw clearly but could not speak clearly; he knew what he could not express. He was enthusiastic, impressionable, and verbally desperate. Imbued with Cabala, alchemy, numerology, church doctrine, the Bible, Martin Moller, etc., he was only coincidentally a Neo-platonic Christian.

14

Note that, in the first edition of the *History of Philosophy* [Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1833 vol. 3, p. 296], Michelet depicts Hegel as holding Boehme to be "The Other Extreme" to Francis Bacon, and in contrasting the two, as holding both to be the founders of modem philosophy, the one an empiricist, the other an intuitionist, a subjectivist, neither at all representative of the speculative sort of philosophy that Hegel prefers. Indeed, Hegel's identification of Bacon and Boehme as the cofounders of modem philosophy may very well be Hegel's indirect suggestion that modern philosophy has erred, has strayed from the true path of speculative thought, on one side with Bacon, on the other side with Boehme. Because the word "speculative" is Hegel's highest term of praise with respect to philosophy, he must react against both Bacon and Boehme, praising instead medieval (e.g., in his Foreword to Hermann Hinrichs' *Religion in Its*

Internal Relation to Systematic Knowledge [Heidelberg: Groos, 1822], p. xxiv) and Neo-platonic philosophy. In *both* editions of the *History of Philosophy* (1833, vol. 3, p. 72; and 1840-44, vol. 3, pp. 62-63) Michelet's Hegel writes: "Proclus led an exceedingly active scholarly life; he was a deep, speculative man, and possessed tremendous knowledge." Hegel saw Proclus as his true forebear in speculative philosophy. To be sure, Hegel must have known both Proclus and Plotinus very well, since his friend, Heidelberg colleague, and frequent correspondent, Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858), prepared standard editions of each of these authors.

But what was Boehme for Hegel? While we certainly cannot disagree with the main portion of Walsh's thesis, that is, that Boehme influenced Hegel, we still must question the second, implied, portion of the thesis, that is, that Boehme exerted a *positive* influence on Hegel. On the contrary, the philosophical influence of the Silesian mystic seems to have been almost entirely *negative* in the development of Hegel's mature system. As we have seen, for example, in the Jena fragments, Hegel progressively tested and rejected or altered Boehme's ideas.

For Hegel, Boehme must have been the picture-thinker *par excellence,* and Hegel had little respect for *Vorstellen,* except as a rather low rung on the ladder to the Absolute. Howard H. Brinton, on pp. 10-11 of *The Mystic Will,* reports that "natural objects furnished [Boehme] so significant an element of his total vocabulary that Hegel accuses him of being incapable of purely abstract thought." Because Boehme's religious thought was so deeply immersed in images, his religion, in Hegel's view, would have been a religion of beauty, of mystery, that is, of Spirit known only sensuously.

15 As such, there is not much more reason for Hegel to take seriously *as philosophy* a "vision" of Boehme than a "vision" (hazon)* of an Old Testament prophet, whose words, like Boehme's, are rich in images but poor in speculative thought. The only truly philosophical concept that Hegel may have taken over directly from Boehme is the idea of fundamental opposition, that *Ja + Nein = Alles,* but Hegel may just as well have derived this from the *coincidentia oppositorum* of Cusanus.

In his frantic search for the right words to express the truths which he saw and felt, Boehme spontaneously invented a bold, sparkling, imaginative, unrefined, distinctly Teutonic language, a language that, although not strictly philosophical, was not without practical application in philosophy. It is this style and vocabulary, and not his philosophy *per se,* that constitutes Boehme's *positive* influence on Hegel. Because of his pure stylistic originality, because of his colorful terms, Hegel respected him, and probably noticed how those who more easily confounded colorful language with philosophical truth, that is, the Romantics of Keats's "Grecian Urn" school of aesthetics16 and those of Novalis's *Christenheit oder Europa*

school of mystical theology,;[17] were more markedly influenced by him. As if to acknowledge specifically this debt to Boehme, two of the three references to him in Hegel's *Encyclopedia* deal with terminology alone, rather than with philosophy, and the third reference is a eulogy.[18]

One of Boehme's favorite devices was the pun, especially the etymological pun, for example, *Qual, Quelle,* and *Qualität,* and the neo-logistic pun, for example, *Ichts* and *Nichts.*[19] Of course, Hegel's own appetite for puns is already familiar.[20] Hegel even lends Boehme a

few Hegelian puns to assist in the exegesis of Boehme in the *History of Philosophy,* as Koyré observes: "The Boehmean conception of the imagination is, according to all probability, favored by the sense of the word *bilden* which means 'to form', from which one may derive *einbilden* = 'to inform (oneself)' and *sich einbilden* = 'to take form within oneself' or 'to incorporate into oneself'. This pun, to be sure, is not found is Boehmewe found it in Hegelbut it is utterly Boehmean."

21 Therefore, in the last analysis, what Hegel chiefly obtained from Boehme was only certain terms within a technical vocabulary and a propensity toward using puns within this vocabulary.

Notes

1. Johannes Hoffmeister, ed, *Dokumente zu Hegels Entwicklung* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1936), pp. 303, 305; cf. Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Boston: Beacon, 1970 [1967]), pp. 149-54, 201-206, 218-19.

2. Scarcely any two commentators agree on the names and interrelations of these three principles and seven qualities. For Ninian Smart, in his article on Boehme in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 1: 328, this concept, especially the flash, is the crux of Boehme's thought, since it explains the "eternal generation of the Trinity." The seven qualities listed here are: (1) "contraction," (2) "diffusion" (3) "rotation or oscillation," (4) "the flash (*Blitz*)," (5) "love," (6) "expression," and (7) "eternal nature of the Kingdom of God, through which there is achieved a harmony between the material and spiritual worlds." The list given by George Mervin Alleman, in *A Critique of Some Philosophical Aspects of the Mysticism of Jacob Boehme* (Philadelphia: [University of Pennsylvania], 1932), pp. 61-63, is: (1) "desire," (2) "essence or form in motion," (3) "anguish or restlessness," (4) "lightning flash," (5) "love," (6) "intelligent life or sound," and (7) "corporeal comprehension of the other qualities, Essential Wisdom, Body of God, Spirit of Harmony." Rufus M. Jones provides the following explanation on pp. 180-83 of *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London:

Macmillan, 1914): The first quality, desire, interacts with its antithesis, the second quality, "the attractive, gravitating tendency which binds whole with whole as an organizing, univer-salizing energy," to produce the third quality, "strain and tension and *anguish*.… movement, oscillation, rotation…. the wheel of life." The first principle, the so-called "fire principle," underlies these three qualities as a substratum. The fourth quality, like an ignition spark, provides energy for either constructive or destructive work if the former, it generates the next level, but if the latter, it remains on its own level: "Fire may be only a 'fire of anguish' or it may go up into a 'fire of love'; it may be a harsh, self-tormenting fire, or it may be a soft, light-bringing, purifying fire. Suffering may harden the spirit, or it may be the condition of joy. Crucifixion may be mere torture, or it may be the way of salvation. It is then here at the *great divide* between the 'qualities' that the universe reveals its differentiation into two kingdoms'the dark' and the light'." This next level, the fifth quality,

is light, an "amiable and blessed Love," "the dawn and beginning of the triumphing spirit of freedom." Complementary to it is the sixth quality, voice, sound, "intelligent expression," or "purposeful utterance." These culminate in the seventh quality, body, specifically, "the incarnation of the spirit" or "the fundamental tendency or energy toward expression in actuality and concrete form." In a way akin to that of the first principle, the second principle, the "light principle," underlies the fifth, sixth, and seventh qualifies as a substratum. The union of dark fire and brilliant light is the third principle, actuality, life, consciousness, "triumph over opposition." These three principles are identified, respectively, with Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. Hoffmeister, *Dokumente,* pp. 304-306; Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension,* pp. 153, 159. Hegel later came to emphasize just the single Trinity, but with its otherworldly and this worldly aspects, thus still keeping his thought tolerably close to Boehme's idea of the trinity unmanifested and the trinity manifested (cf. Howard H. Brinton, *The Mystic Will: Based on a Study of the Philosophy of Jacob Boehme* [New York: Macmillan, 1930], p. 198).

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), p. 535 (hereafter cited as *Phänomenologie*); idem, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), pp. 465-6 (hereafter cited as *Phenomenology*):

> But the *picture-thinking* of the religious community is not this *speculative* [*begreifende*] thinking; it has the content, but without its necessity, and instead of the form of the Notion [i.e., concept] it brings into the realm of pure consciousness the natural relationships of father and son. Since this consciousness, even in its thinking, remains at the level of *picture-thinking,* absolute Being is indeed revealed to it… [although] this consciousness retreats from this its pure object, relating itself to it only in an external manner.

G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion,* ed. Philipp Marheineke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1832), 2: 203; idem,

Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, trans. E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (London: Rout-ledge & Kegan Paul, 1962 [1895]), 3: 32:

> To *Jacob Böhme* this mystery of the threefold nature became clear in another fashion. His way of conceiving of the truth, and his style of thought, are certainly of a rather wild and fantastic sort. He did not attain to the use of the pure forms of thought, but the ruling and fundamental principle of all the ideas which fermented in his mind, and of all his struggles to reach the truth, was the recognition of the presence of Trinity everywhere and in everything.

5. Hoffmeister, *Dokumente,* p. 365; cf. pp. 364-6.

6. Cf. Brinton, The *Mystic Will* p. 73; G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen öber die Geschichte der Philosophie,* 2nd ed., ed. Karl Ludwig Michelet (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1840-1844), 3: 270.

7. Cf. Rufus M. Jones, The *Flowering of Mysticism* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), p. 67.

8. Cf. Smart, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* p. 328; John Joseph Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity: A Study in Jacob Boehme's Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), pp. 20-21; Newton P. Stallknecht, *Strange Seas*

of Thought: Studies in William Wordsworth's Philosophy of Man and Nature (Durham: Duke University Press, 1945), passim; Alexandre Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1929), p. 506, claims that Boehme's fundamental idea of irrational liberty allowed Schelling to combat the panlogism of Hegel.

9. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity,* pp. 50-52.

10. Ibid., pp. 51-52.

11. Joannes Scotus Eriugena, *Periphyseon: On the Division of Nature,* ed. and trans. Myra Uhlfelder, summaries Jean Potter (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1976), p. 7.

12. Eriugena, *Periphyseon,* p. 15.

13. Cf. A. H. Armstrong, ed., *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 26-27, 230-32, 256-57; Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity,* p. 257.

14. Koyré, *Jacob Boehme,* pp. 306-307, says that Boehme asked why the absolute indeterminate God becomes the creating God, a question Neo-platonism posed but did not successfully answer. Brinton, *The Mystic Will,* p. 90: "Boehme believes in a genuine progress from real imperfection to real perfection while, for Paracelsus, nature is a Platonic ladder from nothing to reality"; cf. Hegel, *Geschichte der Philosophie,* 2nd ed., 3: 272-3:

> Boehme had always read the Bible. What other writings he had read is not known. But a host of passages in his works show that he had read much, especially, it is clear, mystical, theosophic, and alchemical writings, indeed to some extent those of [Philippus Aureolus] *Paracelsus,* [also known as] Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim [1493-1541], a philosopher of similar caliber, but really more confused than Boehme and without Boehme's depth of mind.

Paracelsus was an alchemist, magician, astrologer, physician, and Renaissance Neo-platonist. Against Brinton's view, there seems to be little difference between Boehme and Paracelsus on the issue of the epistrophic dialectic; cf. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity,* p. 209:

> … in the process of generating the self-conscious, manifested God… God's self-conscious transcendence… generally corresponds to the centripetal force of Plotinus, the epistrope
>
> *… The *Ungrund* is the all and the nothing. This is an antinomy, giving rise to dialectic. The *Ungrund* is 'nothing and yet is everything.'

In his *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt, 1945), 2: 35, B. A. G. Fuller sees Boehme as

> another great outburst of Christian mysticism, in the mode of Eriugena and Meister Eckhart…. It is not the head but the heart that finds God. God is felt, not known in the sense of being grasped and defined by reason. To feel him we must merge ourselves in his Holy Spirit and abandon ourselves to its ineffable revelation of the divine nature.

Here, Eckhart seems a worthy comparison, while Erigena, who admits and welcomes the use of reason in both theology and religion, does not.

15. In a passage in the *Phänomenologie,* pp. 503-504; *Phenomenology,* pp. 436-37 where Hegel ostensibly is discussing Dionysian nature religion, figures of speech suggest that Hegel may also have Boehme in mind; e.g., although Hegel uses *Aufgang,* the allusion to *Aurora* or *Morgenröte,* Boehme's major

work (1612), is almost unmistakable, for its full title is *Morgenröte im Aufgang, das ist, die Würtzel oder Mutter der Philosophia, Astrologia, und Theologia* (cf. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity,* plate facing p. 72). Hegel writes:

> This 'pathos' is, by itself, the Being of the *risen Sun*… In this enjoyment, then, is revealed what that divine risen Light really is; enjoyment is the mystery of its being. For the mystical is not concealment of a secret, or ignorance, but consists in the self knowing itself to be one with the divine Being and that this, therefore, is revealed. Only the self is manifest to itself; or what is manifest is so, only in the immediate certainty of itself…. The moving impulse is, however, nothing but the many-named divine Light of the risen Sun and its undisciplined tumultuous life which… [is] let go from its… abstract Being….

16. John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1819), lines 49-50: "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

17. Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis), "Die Christenheit oder Europa" (1799), in *Rowohlts Klassiker der Literatur und der Wissenschaft,* no. 130, *Deutsche Literatur* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1963), 11: 41-42:

> Thus even the history of Protestantism does not show us glorious, grand appearances of the supernatural any longer; only its beginning gleams with a transitory fire from Heaven; soon thereafter the desiccation of the sense of the holy is already noticeable; the worldly side has gained the upper hand, the artistic sense suffers sympathetically; only rarely, here and there, does a pure, eternal spark of life shoot forth, and assimilate to itself a small religious community. The spark of life expires, and the religious community again disintegrates and floats away with the current. Thus with [Nikolaus Ludwig von] Zinzendorf [1700-1760], Jacob Boehme, and several others. The modernists keep the upper hand, and the time of a complete slackening of the higher organs, of the era of practical unbelief, draws near.

18. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969), pp. 12-13, 16, 382-3. In the Preface

to the 2nd ed. (1827): “Spirit is essentially consciousness, accordingly of the content made objective; as feeling, spirit is the non-objective content itself (only *qualified,* to use one of J[acob] Boehme’s expressions) and is only the lowest level of consciousness….” Note how Hegel uses a term that Boehme used honorifically as denoting “a surging vitality… an urge much like Bergson’s *élan vital”* (Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity,* p. 83) to indicate such an inferior position within his own system. In par. 472 of the *Encyclopedia:*

> Already in life and still more in spirit, this immanent differentiation is present and herewith an *obligation* begins; and this negativity, subjectivity, the I, freedom, are the principles of wrong and of pain. Jacob *Boehme* grasped *Iness* as *torture* and *pain* and as the *source* of nature and of spirit.

Again, in the Preface to the 2nd ed.:

> Jacob Boehme’s depth in particular affords for this [content] opportunity and forms. The title of Philosophus Teutonicus is rightfully assigned to this powerful spirit; he has partly expanded the import of religion for itself toward the universal idea, drawn up within this import the highest

> problems of reason, and sought to grasp spirit and nature in its more determinate spheres and configurations in this import, since he took as his groundwork that the human spirit and all things are created in the image of God, to be sure, in the image of nothing but the *triune* God, and are only this life to be restored to [the Trinity] out of the loss of their archetype; conversely, he has partly applied the forms of natural things (sulfur, saltpeter, etc., the acidic, the bitter, etc.) forcefully to spiritual forms and forms of thought.

19. Koyré, *Jacob Boehme,* discusses Boehme's pun on *Quelle* and *Qualität,* on p. 88, and his pun on *Qual* and *Qualität,* on p. 196. Hegel discusses them in the *Geschichte der Philosophie,* 1st ed., 3: 310-312; 2nd ed., 3: 279-83. Hegel discusses *Ichts* and *Nichts* in the same work, 1st ed., 3: 315-7; 2nd ed, 3:286-7.

20. Cf. George L. Kline, "Philosophical Puns," *Philosophy and the Civilizing Arts: Essays Presented to Herbert W. Schneider on his Eightieth Birthday,* ed. Craig Walton and John P. Anton (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1974).

21. Koyré, *Jacob Boehme,* p. 218, fn. 4 (quoted by Stallknecht, *Strange Seas of Thought,* p. 200). Hegel uses the pun on *bilden* and *einbilden* in the passage quoted by D. Walsh from the *Geschichte der Philosophie,* 1st ed., 3: 316-7; 2nd ed., 3: 287, where the parallel terms *das Sichinsichhineinbilden* and *das Sichinsichhineinimaginieren* reinforce each other as well as underscore the pun contained within the former term.

Chapter Three
The Fossill and the Phoenix: Hegel and Krochmal on the Jewish Volksgeist

Shlomo Avineri

Hegel's views on the role of the Jewish people in history can be gleaned from a number of sourcesmainly his early theological writings and his lectures on the philosophy of history. It is the aim of this paper to present this portrayal of Judaism by Hegel within the general context of his philosophical thought, as well as to suggest that such an account leaves the Hegelian schema with an unresolved problem to which Nachman Krochmal, who may be called the first Jewish Hegelian philosopher, tried to present an answer.

The juxtaposition of Hegel and Krochmal raises, of course, a number of problems: while the various ramifications of Hegelian philosophy have found a resonance in numerous aspects of world history, Krochmal is virtually unknown; yet one of the aims of this paper is to suggest that despite his obscurityand the difficulties inherent, for the uninitiated, in following a Hegelian thinker expressing himself in early 19th century HebrewKrochmal may be worth the attention of at least professional philosophers. Perhaps the reawakened interest in August Cieszkowski will draw some attention to Krochmal as well; there is a certain analogy in their impact within their respective cultures.

I

Unlike Herder, who in his *Vom Geist der Ebräischen Poesie,* found the survival of the Jews a riddle that provided him with a key to a

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universal understanding of the meaning of *Volksgeist,* Hegel's treatment of the role of Jews in history is marginal to his general philosophical concerns.

1 As the foremost contemporary student of Herder remarked, Herder "resolved to discover what it was that conferred upon the Jews their extraordinary resilience and tenacity…. In so doing he hoped to find a clue not merely to Israel's survival, but also to the significance which it evidently reflected upon the role of shared ideas, beliefs and sentiments.2 No suggestion of such universal significance inherent in the Jewish experience surfaces in Hegel's views on the Jews and their history, despite the fact that, because of his own complex understanding of Christianity, Hegel could not eschew confronting historical Judaism.

Judaism does indeed play a central role in Hegel's early theological manuscripts, which remained mainly unknown until the beginning of this century. Since in most of these early essays Hegel focuses on the emergence of Jesus and the victory of Christianity over paganism, these writings present the most extensive source for Hegel's views on Jewish religion and the Jews generally.

As one would expect, the picture of Judaism that emerges from Hegel's account mainly follows the conventional image of Judaism in traditional Christianand mainly Protestanttheological writing: a secularized version of this image found its way into the views on Judaism of many Enlightenment writers. In the earlier of these essays, Hegel projects a Jesus whose doctrine is a restatement of the Kantian postulate of moral autonomy in a theological context; hence, it is not surprising that the conventional picture of Judaism as a religion of legalistic, formalistic, and "positive" precepts is highlighted against the moral, subjective freedom postulated by Jesus. While there is yet no general philosophy of history in these early writings, a certain prefiguration of some elements of Hegel's later *Weltgeschichte* may be discerned in his perceiving the Jews not merely in terms of their religious beliefs, but also in terms of a nation and a polity. The Greek pagan polis, Judaic monotheism, and the Christianized Roman Empire are posited not only as a succession of religions, but also as sociopolitical entities, each with a religious system fitting into its general culture, its *Geist.*

The basic image of Judaism as perceived by Hegel appears very early on in the essay “The Positivity of Christian Religion”:

> The Jews were a people who derived their legislation from the supreme wisdom on high and whose spirit was now overwhelmed by a burden of statutory commands which pedantically prescribed a rule for every casual action of daily life and gave the whole people the look of a monastic order. As

> a result of this system, the holiest of things, namely, the service of God and virtue, was ordered and compressed in dead formulas, and nothing save pride in this slavish obedience to laws not laid down by themselves was left to the Jewish spirit, which was already deeply mortified and embittered by the subjection of the state to a foreign power.
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> 3

Such a religion was completely devoid of spirituality and the element of subjective belief:

> Now if an Israelite fulfilled the commands of his God, i.e., if he kept the feasts properly, managed his sacrifices properly, and paid tithes to his God, then he had done everything which he could regard as his duty. These commands, however, which might be moral as well as religious, were at the same time the law of the land, and laws of that kind can produce no more than legality. A pious Israelite had done what the divine commands required, i.e., he had fulfilled all the legal requirements, and he simply could not believe that he had any further obligations.4

In one instance, however, Hegel deviated from the traditional Christian attitude to Judaism, namely, in his understanding of the political, national feelings of the Jews during the period of Roman subjugation in the latter period of the Second Temple. Hegel appears to have a sympathy for the Jewish messianic beliefs of the period, and he interprets them not as a generalized craving for divine salvation, but as a specific political reaction to the Jews' enslavement by Rome. Paradoxically, he therefore even has a certain understanding for the rejection of Jesus by the majority of the Jews, since "he did not fulfill their political expectations." The destruction of the Temple by the Romans is not presented by Hegel in the traditional Christian light as a punishment visited upon the Jews for their rejection of Jesus. Rather, he sees it as a tragic consequence of the derision of the Jews who "discarded their ineffective messianic hopes and took up arms." In an extraordinary outburst of sympathy for the Jewish attempt to preserve their polity, Hegel writes:

> Similarly, so long as the Jewish state found spirit and strength enough in itself for the maintenance of its independence, the Jews seldom, or, as many hold, never, had recourse to the expectation of a Messiah. Not until they were subjugated by foreign nations, not until they had a sense of their impotence and weakness, do we find them borrowing in their sacred books for a consolation of that kind. Then when they were

> offered a Messiah who did not fulfill their political expectations, they thought it worth toiling to insure that their state should still remain a state (a nation to which this is a matter of indifference will soon cease to be a nation). They very soon discarded their ineffective messianic hopes and took up arms. After doing everything that most enthusiastic courage could achieve, they endured the most appalling of human calamities and were buried with their polity under the ruins of their city. In history and the judgment of nations, they would stand alongside the Carthaginians and Saguntines, and above the Greeks and Romans, whose cities outlived their polities, if the sense of what a nation may do for its independence were not too foreign to us…. The scattered remnant of the Jews have not abandoned the idea of the Jewish state, but they have reverted not to the banners of their own courage, but only to the standards of an ineffective messianic hope.
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> 5

This, however, is an isolated though significant deviation in Hegel from the conventional Christian view of Judaism. Its significance lies in the fact that the only instance in which Hegel proposed his *own* ideas about the Jews in divergence from the conventional images prevalent in his day, he did it in a context that referred to the Jewish polity and to the political aspect of what could be called the Jewish *Volksgeist.*

The remainder of Hegel's early views on the Jews revert to the accepted pattern of Christian and Enlightenment views about them. Jewish apartnessto which writers of the Enlightenment reacted as critically as conventional Christian theologiansis cited time and again: "The Jewish people… abhorred and despised all surrounding people, wished to remain on its solitary pinnacle and persist in its own way, its own manners and its own conceit."[6] Hegel has to confront the paradox that the historical Jesus, heir and son to such a tradition, was yet able to transcend this limitation, but he minimizes the problem by maintaining that this element of Judaism then reappeared within Christianity itself in the form of the formalism and "positive" nature of the Catholic Church, which reinstituted external coercion into the Christian faith.[7] Hegel's Protestant reading of church history thus helps him in overcoming this problem.

In one of the later essays from that early period, "The Spirit of Christianity," the few redeeming features that Hegel has discerned in the Jewish people disappear. This development parallels Hegel's own evolution toward a less Kantian and more conventional understanding of Jesus and

the Christian message itself. In this second essay Judaism appears not only as the rule of external, coercive leg-

islation, but also as a religion of deceit, cowardice, and utter depravity and enslavement.

8 Truth to the Jews is always particular and limited to themselves,9 and the heroism of the revolt against the Romans, so laudably praised by Hegel in his first essay, is never mentioned again. Hegel never again views the Jews as the bearers of a political consciousness capable of maintaining a commonwealth.

Echoes of this view of the Jews as unable to maintain even a political community of their own reappear in Hegel's essay, *"The* German *Constitution,"* where Hegel bemoans the lack in Germany of that universal spirit of political consciousness necessary for the maintenance of a political structure. After expressing a hope that perhaps a Theseus might appear who will force the Germans, mired as they are in their particularistic concerns, into some sort of political consciousness, Hegel closes the essay on a pessimistic note:

> The German people may be incapable of intensifying its obstinate adherence to particularism to that point of madness reached by the Jewish peoplea people incapable of uniting in a common social life with any other.10

The same images persist in Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of historybut there a problem emerges from the very structure of this philosophy. In these lectures, Hegel discusses Judaism twice, once in a section on Judea in the part dealing with the Oriental World, and then again in the section on Christianity in the part dealing with the Roman world. Despite the fact that Christianityin its specific Hegelian interpretationis of course central to the whole structure of Hegel's philosophy of history, and as such one would perhaps expect him to discuss Judaism, the origin of Christianity, in some detail, the account given of Judaism is cursory, and far less detailed than the complex way in which he has dealt with it in the early theological writings. The Phoenicians merit almost as much space in Hegel's philosophy of history as the Israelitessurely an indication of some ambivalence about the nation whose literary and spiritual heritage became the centerpiece of the Christian Bible.

The Jewish spirit, Hegel maintains at the outset of his section on Judea, is the exact opposite of the Persian spirit, where elements of nature were elevated to pure spirituality. In the Jewish *Volksgeist,* "Nature, which in the East is the primary and fundamental existence, is now depressed to the condition of a mere creature; and Spirit now occupies the first place. God is known as the creator of all men, as he is of all nature, and as an absolute causality generally."[11] Monotheism is the major Jewish contribution to world history, but it is still an unreflective monotheism, and therefore the oneness and exclusiveness of God is externally expressed also through the narrow

choseness and exclusivity of the Jewish religion: “The God of the Jewish people is the God only of Abraham and of his seed; national individuality and a special local worship are involved in such a conception of deity.”

12

It is this constricting element in Judaism which also fetters the individual person”the individual as concrete does not become free, because the absolute itself is not comprehended as *concrete* spirit…. The Jews possess that which makes them what they are, through the *One:* consequently the individual has no freedom for himself.”13

While there is no individuality in Judaism, according to Hegel, the family, on the other hand, “has inherent value: for the worship of Jehovah is attached to the family, and it is consequently viewed as a substantial existence.”14 Yet since there is no place for individuality in Judaism, it can have, according to Hegel, no room for the political as well, which after all is to Hegel the expression of subjective freedom objectified: “The state is an institution not consonant with the Judaistic spirit, and it is alien to the legislation of Moses.”15

Here Hegel encounters his first difficulty in his dealing with Judaism. Literally speaking, the statement that the state has no place within Mosaic legislation is more or less true (if one discounts a few commands, cited by Hegel himself, about kingship and its limitation). In the imposing corpus of the Pentateuch, there is really very little about the political sphere proper. Yet historically speaking, Jewish states did exist, during both the First and Second Temple. For someone like Hegel, who always looked at Objective Spirit in the historical sphere, viewing the Jewish *Volksgeist* primarily through a code of legislation (the Mosaic law), rather than through historical praxis is, to say the least, unusual and quite uncharacteristic. His viewing of the Jews through their holy books and not through the objectification of their active participation in the historical process is another throwback to the theological background of Hegel’s views on Judaism. Yet Hegel is aware that a Jewish polity eventually evolved, and he admits that what originated as an extended patriarchical family “became a

great nation: through the conquest of Canaan, it took a whole country into possession, and erected a Temple for the entire people, in Jerusalem. But properly speaking, no *political* union existed. In case of national danger heroes arose, who placed themselves at the head of the armies…. Later on kings were chosen, and it was they who first rendered the Jews independent. David even made conquests."[16]

Yet Hegel points out that the Davidic kingdom did not last and was soon divided and "the two kingdoms, equally infelicitous in foreign and domestic warfare, were at last subjected to the Assyrians and Babylonians."[17] With these two short sentences Hegel dismisses a rather turbulent political history lasting about 400 years, longer than

the period in which Greek democratic city-states flourished. The fundamental intertwining of the religious and the political, which characterized almost four centuries of Davidic dynastic rule in Judea, and which is historically as intriguing as the phenomenon of the civic religion of the Greek classical polls, is not mentioned at all. It is surprising that while Herder was always aware of the political dimension of the Jewish religion, and Hegel himself, in the early theological writings, seems to sense the nexus between the content of the Jewish religion and its political expression, in the philosophy of history this element is hardly mentioned: Jewish scriptures are at the center of his concerns, not the political expressions of the Jewish *Volksgeist.*

Hegel discusses Judaism again when he describes the emergence of Christianity within the Roman Empire: the misery of the Roman world called for salvation in subjective consciousness; the individual had to free himself as the negation of himself in order to be savedthis is Hegel's reading of the philosophical anthropology of the Crucifixion. Such salvation could not come from within the spiritual elements of the Roman Empire itself, it had to come from outside, and "it is this which gives to the Jewish people their world historical importance and weightfor from this state of mind arose that higher phase in which Spirit came to absolute self-consciousness."

18

Yet the Jewish state itself perished at the hands of the Roman Empire at the same time in which it offered salvation to the wretchedness of spirit imposed on humanity by the Roman yoke: "The Temple of Zion is destroyed, the God-serving nation is scattered to the winds…. Formerly the Land of Canaan and themselves as the people of God had been regarded by the Jews as that concrete and complete existence. But the basis of satisfaction is now lost, and thence arises the sense of misery…. Here, then, misery is not the stupid immersion in a blind fate, but a boundless energy of longing."19

Hegel then goes on to describe the message of Christianity, its appeal to a

dispirited world, its promise of other-worldly redemption, as well as its terrestrial apotheosis. The Jews are not mentioned again, except in a short reference in the section on the Crusades, when Hegel says, without attempting to explain, that "many thousands of Jews were massacred, and their property seized; and after this terrible prelude, Christendom began its march to [the Holy Land]."[20] In another short reference which occurs in the discussion of the emergence of the modem absolutist state, describing the political power the Inquisition bestowed on the Spanish monarchy, Hegel mentions that originally the Inquisition "was established for the persecution of those who secretly adhered to Judaism, and of Moors and heretics."[21]

The characterization of Judaism in Exile as a "boundless energy of

longing" is indeed a most moving evocation of its travails. Yet as far as the historical role of Judaism is concerned, this to Hegel has been consummated with the triumph of Christianity. The Hasmonean dynasty and the emancipation of Judea from the Seleucids (certainly a triumph of monotheism over paganism), the Hellenistic Herodian kingdom, the Mishna, the Talmud, the Midrashic literatureall this political and spiritual development, part preexilic and largely postexilic, never figures in Hegel's philosophy of history. Nor does he raise the much more fundamental question that these postexilic developments should pose: How and why did the Jews survive after their world historical mission had been accomplished? A *Volksgeist* does not disappear or die, according to Hegel, "it dies not a simply natural deathfor it is not a single individual."

22 It is raised to the level of universality, transcends itself, and becomes part of the Universal Spirit: it adds its contribution to world history, merges with itand disappears in this transcendence. This happened to the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romansit should have also happened to the Jews.

The historical fact, however, is that the Jews did not disappear, and have continued to exist as a distinct, identifiable group; we have remarked earlier that on the question of granting these contemporary Jews civil and political rights, Hegel advocated a liberal policy, and there may even be some evidence that he tried to mitigate the harsh anti-Jewish German chauvinism of the student fraternities *(Burschen-schaften*).23 Yet nowhere in his philosophy of history does Hegel attempt to answer the question of why Jewsunlike the classical Greeks or Romans were able to survive beyond the advent of Christianity. Conventional Christian theology was faced very early on with a similar question, and it found an answer, or a set of answers, to the obstinate survival of the Jews within its own theological argumentation. Yet Hegel could not adopt this theological argument in his philosophy of history, and he never suggested an alternative explanation. Moreover: the question is never really raised by Hegel in his whole philosophy of history; the Jews thus remain, for Hegel, in some way in history but not of history, a fossilyet a living organism, a distinct

community who in a way should not be there, and for whose continuing existence no adequate answer is given within the majestic schema of Hegel's philosophy of history. Herder was both troubled and fascinated by this continued existence of the Jews and argued that some universal lesson could be learnt from it; for Hegel, it appears, there was no lesson because he never really admitted that a problem existed.

II

Hegel's influence on a whole generation of early nineteenth century, secularized, emancipated Jewish intellectuals in Germany cannot be underestimated. Despite what Hegel said about Judaism, they found in Hegel's universalism a legitimacy for transcending the confining limits of orthodox Judaism and embracing Christianity, not for its revelation, of which they could not but be skeptical, but for its philosophical superiority as a universal religion against the tribalism and particularism associated with Judaism; and this superiority could be argued in Hegelian terms. Since Hegel has secularizedmade philosophically acceptablethe traditional Christian images of Judaism as being superseded by Christianity, these Jewish intellectuals could now feel much more relaxed about their conversion.

24 Eduard Gans in a serious, if not somber, mood, Henrich Heine in a more frivolous one, could put Hegel's philosophical vision into practice by applying for conversion as a "Passport to European Civilization" without feeling that they have betrayed their ancestral heritage or abandoned their people in distress.

It was left to an obscure Jewish scholar on the periphery of Germanic culture, writing in Hebrew in Eastern Galicia, to be the first thinker to evolve a critique of Hegel's views on Judaism and point out some serious structural flaws in its argument.

Nachman Krochmal, also known by his Hebrew acronym of *Ranak*, was born in 1785 in Brody, Galicia, which was then passing into Hapsburgian rule in the wake of the partition of the old Polish Commonwealth. He went through the conventional Jewish orthodox education of his age, but like many others of his generation, he also witnessed the upheavals caused by the Napoleonic Wars in his comer of the world. As his disciple and biographer recounts, Krochmal also studied "German and French; he learned the history of many nations and studied the philosophy of Spinoza, Mendelssohn…. Lessing and especially Kant, until he arrived at the magnificent scholars of our own age, namely Schelling, Fichte and

Hegel."[25] Krochmal spent most of his life in obscure Galician villages, advocating the introduction of Western, European education into the curriculum of orthodox Jewish schools, and thus became one of the first pillars of the Eastern European Enlightenment (*Haskala*).

Krochmal's *magnum opus,* written in Hebrew and never finished in his lifetime, was published posthumously, in 1851, under the title *Moreh Nevuchei Ha-Zamen, A Guide of the Perplexed of Our Age.* The obvious echo to Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed* is an indication of

the major aim of Krochmal's project. Just as Maimonides tried to interpret Jewish traditional thought within the context of the dominant medieval Christian and Muslim Aristotelianism, so Krochmal attempted the even more ambitious task of supplying the modem Jewish intellectual, versed in orthodox Judaism but also aware of the main currents of modern thought, with a philosophical guide that would enable him to find his Jewish identity within a modern philosophical context.

Because Krochmal's book was written in Hebrew and has never been translated into any other language, his project and its arguments are hardly known even among scholars of the Hegelian tradition. It is my aim to follow the main lines of that part of the *Guide* dealing with the philosophy of history, and to point out its indebtedness to Hegel, as well as to show how Krochmal performs an *Aufhebung* of Hegel's views on Judaism from within the Hegelian tradition itself.

26

The crucial question for Krochmal is the one to which we alluded in the first part of this paper: If, according to Hegel, the role of Judaism has been consummated through the appearance of Jesus and the emergence of Christianity, how is it that the Jews have survived for almost 2,000 years beyond what should have been their *Aufhebung* into the universality of world history? To follow Krochmal's argument, a short account of the general structure of his philosophy of history is necessary.

Basically, Krochmal draws from both Herder and Hegel, and the cyclical theory he proposes is reminiscent of Vico, yet there is no evidence that he was aware of Vico or of his thought. The point of departure of Krochmal's historical thinking is that the subjects of history are not individuals, but social entitiesnations (*umot*). Man is a social animal, and man's achievements express themselves in collective entities possessing a common denominator. History is the story of these cultural entities, and this heritage common to groups of human beings is what creates culture: it is the spirit of the nation, the *Volksgeist:* in Hebrew, *ruah ha-uma.*

It is this structure that gives a *telos* to history:

> We witness that it was the advice of divine Providence not to disperse the human race totally, like the other animals whose essence is isolation and whose association is purely accidental, but to group mankind into small and large associations: first families, and then clans and city-states, until we arrive at the largest association of a people organised in its leadershipthis is called a nation.[27]

True to the Hegelian connotation of *Volksgeist,* Krochmal views the spirit of a nation not as a mystical and irrational force, but as the

aggregate of specific qualities common to a given group of men which distinguish this group from other groups; it is the spiritual root common to the human creativity of any given human group. According to Krochmal, the observer who would look into the differences between nations will be able to discover a key or code that characterizes all the institutions and expressions of culture of any given entity:

> Just like the individual spirit, so the spirit of a nation has specific traits in every single entity, and it can be discerned in all its acts. In arts and crafts, in customs and laws, in the education and upbringing of children, in the knowledge of the divine and in religious worshipin all its acts in peace and war, in all its periods and vicissitudes, a nation could always be distinguished and differentiated from other nations. It is though true that sometimes it is difficultand much understanding would be necessary to discover the relationship between these spiritual phenomena, their value and their interconnections.
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> 28

Following Herder, Krochmal sees three stages in the development of all nations: (a) the stage of growth; (b) the stage of great historical achievement; (c) the stage of decline. These stages are linked to each other dialectically: out of a nation's struggles during its time of growth there emerges its historical significance in its apotheosis, and it is the elements of its power that bring about its internal corruption and decline; for "when splendour and glory abound in a nation, the love of luxury develops and art will be subjugated to mere sensual stimuli."29 Thus it happens that every nation goes through a period of grandeur to be followed by decline and disintegration.

Yet the specific contribution of every nation becomes integrated into the totality of world history and lives on in the universal heritage of mankind, even after the disappearance of the nation that made the contribution and introduced it to history. Again, following Hegel, Krochmal maintains that, despite the disappearance of the Greeks and Romans from the historical stage, their contributions persist within world history. The Greeks endowed mankind with the aesthetic spirit, while Rome bequeathed a political and juridical tradition to all mankind. Thus, while individual *Volksgeister* disappear, their contributions persist within the universal *Weltgeist.* Dialectically, every *Volksgeist* is thus only a moment in the ever-unfolding

Weltgeist, itself an expression of the Absolute Spirit. This is the dialectical synthesis of the particular and the universal in the Hegelian tradition: national culture (the *Volksgeist*) is not an end unto itself, but only a step in the development of universal culture, and the mounting series of national cultures expresses also a mounting order of an ever-wid-

ening universalityfrom the *polis* in its closeness and apartness to the modem world with its universalistic structures and contents.

The revolutionary significance of Krochmal's thinking within the Jewish intellectual tradition is his maintaining that the Jews must be understood in this universal context of national histories. While orthodox Judaism saw the Jews as standing outside the general flux of Gentile historical development, Krochmal views the Jewish people as just a nation among the nations, experiencing the same stages, falling under the same rules. Neither is Jewish religion an unchanging and frozen entity, pre-existing in its crystalized form from time immemorial, but an outcome of the universal change of events, embedded in world history.

It was this revolutionary incorporation of Judaism into a universal world history that brought upon Krochmal severe criticism and intellectual persecution from rabbinical orthodoxy. By integrating Jewish history into world history, Krochmal has been one of the first modernizers of Jewish self-consciousness, and though himself a religious person, greatly contributed to a secularized understanding of Jewish self-perception.

Yet, while rejecting the orthodox view of Judaism as immutable and eternal, Krochmal had to face the question of the survival of the Jewish people beyond what would appear to be the third state of its existenceits decline heralded by the twin events of the emergence of Christianity and the destruction of the Second Temple. Looking to Hegel for an answer, Krochmal finds nonewe have already seen that the question is never really raised by Hegel himself. Since Krochmal is unwilling to revert to the orthodox rabbinical answeran *a priori* belief in the eternity and transtemporality of Judaismhe tries another approach.

If the whole Hegelian schema of world history has validity, an answer must be found to the survival of the Jewish people and to the dilemma posed by the strangeness of its historical behavior, that is, of not disappearing at the stage at which all other nations have disappeared. Here Krochmal turns the tables on Hegel, while constructing his argument within the Hegelian framework. Krochmal concurs with Hegel that the Jewish contribution to world history has been the idea of monotheism, yet he develops this idea in

an original way: he maintains that while all the contributions of other nations to world history have been of a *particular* nature, the Jewish contribution has been of a *universal* nature. The Greek contribution in the field of aesthetics and the Roman contribution in the field of statecraft, basically relate to the world of externalities, and hence are particular; the Jewish contributionmonotheismdirectly relates to the Absolute Spirit, which is the content of history itself. Hence the Jewish con-

tribution is not bound by time and space, because it is itself absolute and universal and is not subject to the ebb and flow of historical development. The content of Judaism is therefore equal to the content of philosophythe Ideaand this is the reason for the ability of the Jews to transcend time and place.

Like Hegel, Krochmal maintains that all religions try to confront the Absolute; primitive religion tries to do it in a yet undifferentiated form and only historical development brings forth more complex and more adequate expressions of this idea:

> You should know that all religion is grounded in the spiritual realm, so that even the basest religion of savages is not related to something material, which is particular, finite and perishable, but is ultimately related to its sustaining power: and this transcends the ephemeral changes of the particular and is universal and infinite….
> [All nations have therefore spiritual elements in their religion,] yet they could not transcend particular spiritualities [and identified them] with what is still particular, related to time and space, and therefore transient. These nations have not yet reached the truly universal, which has actuality in the Absolute Spirit: this is pure reason and cannot have an external form.
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> 30

Only in Jewish monotheism is this spiritualitywhich is found in the belief system of every religion, but is still imprisoned within particularismraised to the level of universality. Since the material and the particular are transient by their very nature, the nations that introduced such particular spiritualities (like the Greeks and the Romans) disappear in the course of history, whereas the bearer of Absolute Spiritthe people of Israelan transcend the temporality of history:

> Such is the case with all nations whose spirituality is particular and hence finite and perishable. But in the case of our nation, though we too are subject to the laws of [finite] nature with regard to material aspects and sensuous externalities… our universal spirituality saves us from perishing.31

Jewish historybecause of its universal contentis thus different from other histories: Krochmal discovers in it not only the three stages of the historical development of all nations, but also a cyclical pattern, *in which the three stages are repeated again and again in every cycle:* every time the third stage arrives, the Jews, rather than disappear and disintegrate, start afresh

with a new cycle and, like the legendary Phoenix, proceed all over again to a new first stage.

Jewish history appears therefore to Krochmal not as linear but as

cyclical, and most of the second part of his *Guide* is dedicated to this dialectical periodization of Jewish history. Krochmal discerns three cycles in Jewish history, and each cycle encompasses within itself the three historical stages of youth-maturity-decline that characterize all historical development. Jewish history in that way is the meeting point of the temporal and the transcendental, the finite and the infinite, the historical expression of the Absolute Spirit.

These are the three cycles in Jewish history as viewed by Krochmal: (a) from Abraham to the destruction of the First Temple; (b) from the Return from Babylon through the destruction of the Second Temple to the death of Rabbi Akiva and the fall of Betar during Bar-Kochba's revolt against the Romans; (c) from the composition of the Mishnah until the 1648-49 pogroms of Chmielnicki in the Ukraineand since then, a new era has begun, heralded by the Enlightenment and Emancipation. What characterized this periodization is the fact thattrue to the Hegelian traditionits key is the rise and decline of *political* structures among the Jews. This is a highly politicized and national periodization of history, and Krochmal is the first Jewish modern thinker not only to propose an outline of Jewish history within a general philosophy of history, but also to take political criteria into the cornerstones of its structure. With minor modifications, Krochmal's construction of Jewish history and its periodization would remain more or less intact in later generations and would constantly accompany the Jewish national renaissance.

Krochmal's *tour de force* is intellectually brilliant and stimulating: he takes Hegel and judges him by his own criteriaand finds him wanting in not supplying a satisfactory answer to the survival of the Jewish people beyond the moment at which its contribution had been integrated into world history. The question is asked and the answer proposed in Hegelian terms, but through an internal *Aufhebung* of the qualities attributed by Hegel to the Jews. If Hegel viewed the Jews as having made a significant contribution to world history in the past, and in the past alone, and their continued existence remains for him an inexplicable aberration, this very fact serves Krochmal in proving the absolute content of the essence of Judaism. Moreover, while Hegel and the Left Hegelians could criticise the continued

existence of the Jews as being particularistic, and hence irrational and superfluous, in Krochmal's writings *the Jews themselves appear as the bearers of absolute universality:* the Jews, not the nations of the world, are truly universal; it is the Gentiles who are particularistic. For Krochmal, the people of Israel is elevated to the only historical phenomenon that is simultaneously metahistorical, and hence the very historical existence of the Jewish people, far from being an anachronism and an aberration, is itself of philosophical significance. The people of Israel is the link

between the eternal and the temporal, between the philosophical and the historical. The roots of the Jewish people are, like those of all other peoples, in historyyet its *telos* transcends the temporalities and externalities of mere historical existence. The Jewish people is hence *am olam*in the double meaning of the term: a universal as well as an eternal people.

The attribution of Hegelian qualities to the Jewish people thus becomes a key to Krochmal's restructuring of Hegel's own philosophy of history. It is not the Gentile peoples, who reached their hegemony through material, terrestrial, and temporal means, that are the bearers of true universality; each of these world historical nations (*Welthis-torische Vö1ker*) is transient; only the Jewish people, whose power is the power of the spirit, is truly universal; hence the Jews could survive without political power, without a state. In the spirituality and continued existence of the Jewish people, the Absolute Spirit of Hegelian philosophy finds its true subject. The Jews are thus not to be seen as an historical quirk, drawing out their existence through mere stubbornness for generations and millenia after their role had been exhausted; they have an eternal, universal *telos* in the realm of the Absolute Spirit.

Such a Hegelianization of Jewish history, carried out through a dialectical *Aufhebung* of certain elements of Hegel's own philosophy, is, undoubtedly, a highly original intellectual breakthrough in Jewish self-consciousness in the era after the French Revolution. This integration of Jewish history into a revised reading of Hegel's philosophy of history, whose subjects are nations and their cultures (*Volksgeister*), views Jewish history as the history of a nation, not of a mere religious community, hence there can be a Hegelian legitimacy in writing Jewish history, while no such legitimacy could be found for writing Christian history as such. In the emerging world of nations, Krochmal gives a universal significance to Jewish history in the same way as Herzen did to Russian history. Yet in doing this, he also fills a lacuna left within Hegel's own philosophy of history.

Notes

1. This is not the place to discuss another aspect of Hegel's attitude to the Jews: his support for Jewish emancipation in the modem world. Despite

Hegel's critical views on historical Judaism, §§ 209 and 210 of his Philosophy of Right very dearly shows his outspoken support for granting full civil and political rights to Jews in the German states of his time.

2. Frederick M. Barnard, "Particularity, Universalismand the Hebraic Spirit: Heine and Herder," Jewish Social Studies, 43, 2 (Spring 1981): p. 123.

See also his "The Hebrews and Herder's Political Creed," *Modern Language Review* 59 (1959): pp. 533-46.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings,* trans. T. M. Knox, Introduction, Richard Kroner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), pp. 68-69.

4. Ibid., pp. 98-99. On another instance (p. 140), Hegel accuses later Christianity, when it had become institutionalized in the Catholic Church, of following Judaism in this insistence on external obedience, with the difference, however, that "while in Judaism only actions are commanded, the Christian church goes further and commands feelings, a contradiction in terms." In these early Kantian interpretations of the message of Jesus in Hegel's writings, Catholicism fares even worse than Judaism.

5. Ibid., pp. 158-9.

6. Ibid., p. 177.

7. Ibid., p. 181.

8. Ibid., pp. 190-91. In describing the Exodus from Egypt, Hegel says that the Israelites "have only the malice the coward feels when his enemy is brought low by somebody else's act…. The Jews vanquish, but they have not battled. The Egyptians are… murdered in their sleep, or poisoned by an invisible attack, and the Israelites… profit from all this misery, like the notorious robbers during the plague at Marseilles…. It is no wonder that this nation, which in its emancipation bore the most slavelike demeanor, regretted leaving Egypt…. A passive people giving laws to itself would be a contradiction…."

9. Ibid., p. 298.

10. *Hegel's Political Writings,* trans. T. M. Knox, Introduction, Z. A. Pelczynski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 242.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree, new ed., Preface, Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 195.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., pp. 196-7. Hegel correctly observes that for this reason there is no belief in classical Judaism in the immortality of the soul, “for individuality does not exist in and for itself.”

14. Ibid., p. 197.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., pp. 197-8.

17. Ibid., p. 198.

18. Ibid., p. 321.

19. Ibid., pp. 322-3.

20. Ibid., pp. 391-2.

21. Ibid., p. 429.

22. Ibid., p. 75.

23. Cf. S. Avineri, “A Note on Hegel’s Views on Jewish Emancipation,” *Jewish Social Studies* 25, 2 (April 1963): 145-51.

24. For this development, see the fascinating account in Emil L. Fackenheim’s *Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), esp. ch. 3, “Moses and the Hegelians,” pp. 79-169.

25. Meir Ha-Levi Letteris, “Toledot Nachman Ha-Cohen Krochmal” [“The

Life of Nachman Krochmal"], first published in Hebrew in *Kalender und Jahrbuch füt Israeliten füt das Jahr* 5615 (1854-1855), ed. Joseph Wertheimer (Wien, 1854), p. A-viii. Also reprinted in Y. Kaufmann's *Likutei Ranak* (Krochmal Anthology), (Haifa: Reali School, 1950), pp. 24-25.

26. For a concise account of Krochmal's philosophy, see Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times* (New York, Chicago, San Francisco: 1968), ch. 5. See also S. Schechter, *Rabbi Nachman Krochmal and the "Perplexities of the Time"* (London: 1887); J.L. Landau, *Nachman Krochmal, ein Hegelianer* (Berlin, 1904); Simon Rawidowicz, "War Nachman Krochmal Hegelianer?" *Hebrew Union College Annual* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1928), 5:534-82; Ismar Schorsch, "The Philosophy of History of Nachman Krochmal," *Judaism* 10 (1961): 237-45; Jacob Taubes, "Nachman Krochmal and Modern Historicism," *Judaism* 12 (1963): 150-64. For a detailed account in Hebrew of Krochmal's relationship to Hegel, see Shulamit Tov, *Torat Hegel be-Mishnat* Ranak [Hegel's Philosophy in Krochmal's Thinking] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1954).

27. Nachman Krochmal, *Moreh Nevuchei Ha-Zeman,* rev. S. Rawidowicz (London: Ararat, 1961), p. 20.

28. Ibid., p. 35.

29. Ibid., pp. 35-36.

30. Ibid., p. 29. Hegel uses almost identical language in describing the truth inherent in every religion, regardless of its external form: "Every form of spiritual force, and *a forteriori* every religion is of such a nature, that whatever its peculiar characters, an affirmative element is necessarily contained in it. However erroneous a religion may be, it possesses truth, although in a mutilated form. In every religion there is a divine presence, a divine relation, and a philosophy of history has to seek out the spiritual element even in the most imperfect form" (*Philosophy of History,* pp. 195-6.)

31. Krochmal, *Moreh Nevuchei Ha-Zeman,* p. 40.

Comments, by Leo Rauch

It almost seems as though, in raising the problem of Jewish history, we have brought ourselves to the point of asking: What is living and what is dead in Hegel's philosophy of history? Does Jewish history provide the test caseor "crucial experiment"for determining the truth of Hegel's philosophy of history? Can Jewish history be understood in Hegelian terms, yet be seen as presenting the one exception to his general model? It would seem that there is a contradiction here, if Jewish history is to be interpreted from the universally applicable Hegelian standpoint, yet is to be regarded as entirely unique and thus utterly resistant to such categorization. In any event, it would appear that Jewish history poses a substantial challenge: first, to any Hegelianized recasting of it (such as Krochmal's); and second, to the Hegelian model itself. In both these ways, it seems that the historic nation *par excellence,* having invented the idea of a *national* history as part of the cosmic process (Hegel's own idea), poses the greatest problem for Hegelian historicism.

First, what must Krochmal give up and what can he expect to gain by Hegelianizing Jewish history

1 To be consistent with the Hegelian approach, he would have to give up the idea of Judaism's uniqueness. That is, he would have to relativize its history in order to arrive at a *weltgeschichtliche* perspective. Like every other national culture, Judaism would have to be seen as making a *partial* contribution to the universal absolute spirit, the goal of spirit's self-awareness that is to be achieved in the process of an evolving universal history. But Krochmal insists on adhering to that broadly evolutionary idea *and* to the idea of Judaism's uniquenessand it seems that the only resolution of that impasse is to say, with Krochmal, that Judaism is already in

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touch with the Absolute Spirit. But then it ought not to be undergoing developmentand Krochmal admits that it does. In addition, there is the difficulty that the immutable Absolute Spirit enters the temporal world; and indeed this can be seen as the chief difficulty in the Hegelianization of Jewish history.

2 Thus Krochmal wants to retain the sense of continuity and growth he derives from the Hegelian model in general, but without the associated relativization of any particular national history. To do this, he adopts something like Vico's model of *corsi* and *ricorsi* for Jewish history,3 a *repetitive* pattern of growth, maturity, and decline, although these processes spiral, helix fashion, like a braided cord, around an ever-broadening center. This, then, is the challenge that any Hegelianizing of Jewish history must meet.

Second, in regard to the challenge to the Hegelian model itself, the problem (in my view of it) arises not from the side of Judaism, but from the side of Hegel's unhistorical interpretation of it: belonging as it does to the "Oriental World," in which only one man is free, Judaism should have stepped down from the stage of world history after making its nationally characteristic contribution (although it might continue to rattle on, as a fossil). Thus Hegel views Judaism entirely in static and finite terms, as though it had but a limited set of ideas to impart to the world, and as though these ideas lived only in a fixed temporal matrix. Yet Judaism survivesand *we* can see this as due to its dynamism: in the way it renews itself, phoenix-like, through (among other factors) its contact with Hellenism, with medieval Aristotelianism, and then with the modem Enlightenment. Thus, instead of withering away within the confines of the Oriental World, Judaism absorbs ideas from the Greek and modem worlds, reacts to them by modifying its own cultural concepts, and contributes to them in turn. Its message is not fixed but continually evolving, not one idea but a variegated brew. That is one part of Krochmal's answer to Hegel.4 A further part of that answer is Krochmal himself, adapting Jewish history to an external visionHegel'sas Philo adapted Judaism to Neoplatonism, Maimonides to Aristotelianism, and Men-delssohn to the outlook of the *Aufklärung* (well

into Hegel's "Germanic World", with its shared vision that all men, as men, are free).

Essential to Hegel's discussion is the assumption that the tripartite division into cultural "worlds" is unalterably fixed, and that the purveyors of a given cultural outlook are caught in it like flies in amber. But why must we accept this assumption? Perhaps what would have been more in keeping with Hegel's own sensitivity to historical currents (as reflected, say, in the *Phenomenology*) would be the realization that some cultures strain against their ideational bonds, and some even transcend them. Yet, as Professor Avineri's summation of Hegel's views on Judaism amply remind us, the opposite to such sensitivity prevails in Hegel's outlook.

Perhaps we might supplement Hegel's view by distinguishing between static religions that pass from the scene because (like Greco-Roman polytheism) they have little spiritual development to undergo beyond the initial visionand the dynamic religions that survive because (like Judaism and Christianity) they are constantly deepening and broadening their view of God, man and world. To be sure, the distinction is simplistic: Are they dynamic because they have more to say, or do they have more to say because they are dynamic? We are blurring the line between antecedent and consequent. But perhaps this is unavoidable for cultural phenomena as complex as these. Certainly, we are blurring the line between Jewish religion and culturebut in any case they are hardly separable in Jewish history. (Presently, I shall be commenting on Krochmal's more extended Hegelian explanation of the survival of Judaism.)

I might point out, by the way, that there is a long-standing controversy as to whether Krochmal was an Hegelian. The affirmative position was taken by Landau,

[5] in 1904. The negative view was upheld by the modern editor of Krochmal, Simon Rawidowicz,[6] in 1928. The facts are inconclusive: the only post-Kantian philosopher to whom Krochmal alludes (although without naming him) is Hegel. No one questions the fact that Krochmal was thoroughly conversant with, and influenced by, the broad stream of German idealism. But there are some grounds for saying that Krochmal was perhaps more influenced by Fichte and Schellinga view held by Julius Guttmann.[7]

It appears easier to state the ways Krochmal was *not* an Hegelian, than to show how he was. Guttmann declares that "Krochmal brought idealistic philosophy…. closer to the Jewish philosophic tradition by stripping it of its dialectical character."[8] Thus, although he adopted Hegel's views as to the nature and essence of religion, what is apparently missing in Krochmal's book is anything like a *dialectical* account of the world's emergence, diremption, and turn to self-con-sciousness. I find this criticism unwarranted, in view of Krochmal's tortuous account of how God creates the world out of his own self-confinement, so that, on one hand, God's being permeates the world, and yet the only name predicable of God is

“Nothingness”a thought Krochmal took from the Cabbal. Surely, the idea that God creates *ex nihilo* and yet from himself is as dialectical a vision as can be suggested.

One does, however, miss in Krochmal the dialectic of historical development, the elements of contradiction and overcoming, the progress through struggle. The remark made by Rawidowicz, in his introduction to the 1924 edition of Krochmal, to the effect that Krochmal’s way of looking at history is genetic rather than dialectical, seems to have been taken up and supported by Guttmann and others.[9] On the other hand, there seems to be much agreement on the point that Krochmal is more concerned with concrete detail than Hegel isthat

in addition to speaking of history as the process wherein the world-spirit becomes conscious of itself, Krochmal is interested in *how* national cultures are formed. But this is not a non-Hegelian stance when we remember Hegel's own concern with concrete history, and with the way the spiritual aim works itself out in historical time. The apparent division between the abstract and the concrete is itself decidedly un-Hegelian, and to regard Hegel as being "more abstract" or "more theoretical" (a view that has its unfortunate echoes in Marxism) is, in my view, a complete misreading of Hegel's intentions. The dialectic is not opposed to the concreteand Krochmal would have known this, careful reader of Hegel that he was. Logic is not the polar opposite to history; rather, the dialectic operates *in* time. This idea could not have been lost on anyone familiar with the declaration: "What is rational is real…."

There is a further puzzle. According to Hegel (in the *Phenomenology,* the *Encyclopedia* and elsewhere), religion and philosophy form a continuum such that the one must eventually give way to the other, since the more discursive *Begriff* (in philosophy) does what the imagistic *Vorstellung* (in religion) cannot do. The process of replacement does seem to subsist more in the realm of dialectic than of history: philosophy is given a logical (but apparently not a temporal) ultimacy because it can resolve the problems and contradictions raised in the less-than-conceptual religion. And in this we are to see Hegel's departure from historicism: if religion gives way to philosophy, that is only because philosophy has that implicit capability, abstractly conceived, of resolving the contradictions religion bears with it. The engine of movement, here, is supposed to be purely ideal, not concreteand in view of Hegel's emphasis on concreteness that "mistake" should have been avoided. That is, it would mean that we had the right to ask: Is it a matter of historical fact that religion has given way to philosophy? Must we concur in the underlying assumption that they share the same ends but differ as to means? And *if* we indeed agree that philosophy has replaced religion, can this be credited to philosophy's greater capacity for conceptualization?

If these questions *could* be stated with justification, we might find responses to them in Krochmal. One response of his is to incorporate the

distinction between the conceptual aspect and the representational into Judaism itself (as Hegel should have done in regard to Christianity, presumably). That is to say, both these religions have resisted "replacement" by philosophy because they have incorporated philosophical elements (and entire philosophical movements) within themselves. This has occurred throughout their respective histories, and it serves as a further reason for their respective survivals. In regard to both religions, however, we may ask whether, in developing

their conceptual aspects, they might not have been expected to abandon their representational side eventually. Thus, when Krochmal insists that Israel has survived because it has grasped "the absolutely spiritual" (*haRuhani haMuhlat*), must this not also entail for him, as an Hegelian, that it could have been expected to surrender its religiosity inevitably? It would seem that this *is* inevitable (but perhaps we are thinking abstractly in this way), that is, the surrender would be inevitable in view of the fact that Judaism's initial "representation" of the deityas pure spirit incapable of being representedis already more conceptual, all-embracing, and abstract at the very outset than is the comparable "representation" for other religions.

Yet for Krochmal, as for Hegel, there is a continuity between the most primitive grasp of religion and the most advanced: all are heading toward a *knowledge* of God, and presumably at the highest level this would combine "knowledge by description" with "knowledge by acquaintance"*Begriff* and *Vorstellung*. The fact that religion necessarily includes representational elements does not make it inferior to conceptualization, in Krochmal's view. What is of primary importance is the content of that representation. Now, the dialectical element in the Judaic "representation" of the deity is the fact that, at its highest levels, that representation is contentless. As pure spirit, God can have no representation, even when expressing His will and entering history.

This is why Krochmal can speak of a special relation between Judaism and the absolute spirit. That special relation can be schematized in the following way: the one-sided view of God, man, and world, expressed by any particular people is the indirect work of the universal world-spirit. But in the case of Judaism, the *content* of its God-conception *is* the *Weltgeist* itself: the God of worship is that Absolute Spirit the various cultures are slowly becoming aware ofand that Absolute Spirit *is* the creative *Weltgeist.* Thus, Judaism, having conceived (and "represented") its God, "knows" him as absolute spirit. Here, then, the absolute spirit has come full circle and become conscious of itself. Moreover, Judaism acknowledges this conception as the creation of its *Volk and* as the work of the all-creative *Weltgeist* working in it. Thus, Judaism is aware of itself as creative and as

absolute. In this self-reflection, therefore, we see the aim of history fully attainedand in that very reflexivity there is Judaism's claim to absoluteness.

Now, this self-consciousness does not amount to a finite contribution. Rather, since the form and content of that contribution constitute the fulfillment of selfhood, that self-consciousness *must* continue to extend and deepen itselfand this is its own dialectical aspect. Hegel has emphasized this in numerous ways, and it is exactly

what Krochmal says about Jewish history.

10 Having arrived at self-knowledgethat is, of the knowledge of its God as self-knowing and as the possession of its peopleit can only proceed to know itself more and more fully. And this it achieves in two ways (among others): by allowing that self-consciousness to permeate all aspects of life, and by coming into contact and struggling with external ideas and influences.

What I am suggesting, therefore, is that the survival of Judaism is no more a puzzle than is the survival of Christianity, in the light of their dynamism and vitalityimpelled (especially in the case of Judaism) by that quantum leap into self-consciousness and the awareness of itself as identical to the absolute spirit. Krochmal evinces a sophisticated awareness of the complexity of Jewish history, by distinguishing between an outer and an inner sphere, and by seeing the outer history as resulting from the inner relation between the Jewish people and the absolute spirit.

In his view, as I noted, this constitutes a special relationship, freeing the Jewish people from the time-bound existence of other nations. The key-term, again, is "absolute spirit"and if we allow the cogency of that term, we shall be admitting, by implication, that in Hegel's own terms lies the key to the overcoming of the Hegelian strictures vis-à-vis Judaism (as Avineri shows us).

In summation I would say that if (as Hegel declares) "history is the development of Spirit in time…," then it would seem that the spiritualization of the deity is as close to the fulfillment of that purpose as history can come within the confines of religious *Vorstellung*.11 Krochmal certainly intends this when he claims for Jewish history a status of transtemporality on the basis of the contribution to universal spirituality.12 And yet he does see development within Judaism. He is obviously having it both ways: On one hand, that absolute truth has been present in Judaism from its beginnings.13 On the other hand, the message of God's (and man's) spirituality is undergoing successive conceptual clarification and embellishment. Perhaps this schema involves an over-simplification and over-intellectualization of the complexities of Jewish history (as Guttmann

suggests). From our viewpoint, however, what is gained thereby is the equivalent, in the sphere of history, of a unified field theory for physicsand this is altogether appropriate for the thinker who is to come to be regarded as the founder of the all-embracing discipline known as *die Wissenschaft des Judentums.*

Notes

1. Nachman Krochmal's book, Guide to the Perplexed of Our Time, has never been translated into English. The earliest edition (1851) was published post-

humously by L. Zunz, who gave the book its title: *Morei Nevuhei HaZman.* The edition I consulted was published by Zunz (in Lemberg) in 1863. The more recent edition, containing the work and some letters, is titled *Kitvei Nachman Krochmal* [Writings of…], ed. S. Rawidowicz (Berlin: Ayanot Publishing Co., 1924; 2nd ed., London and Waltham, Mass: Ararat, 1961).

2. This point has been discussed at length by Nathan Rotenstreich, "Muhlat veHitrahshut beMishnato shel Ranak" (Absolute and Temporality in the Doctrine of Ranak), *Knesset* 6 (1941): 339. Also in his "Tefisatho haHistorith shel Ranak" (Krochmal's Theory of History), *Zion*, 7 (1942): 30-31. In English, see Rotenstreich's book, *Jewish Philosophy in Modern Times* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), 139-43.

3. Krochmal, chs. 8, 10.

4. Ibid., 16: 212:

> The belief in God and his Torah is undoubtedly the basis of knowledge, learning and education for man…. But theology [*Hohmat haEmunah*], although [coming] later in time, is of greater importance…. Our sages never hesitated to borrow from other [i.e., non-Judaic] areas such concepts and terms as they needed for their own investigations, especially from logic, the entire essence of which is the distinguishing of intellectual concepts. In every generation, they were compelled to entertain topics and discussions that had already grown and ripened in another pasture of the [universal] spiritual heritage, and this is boundless for the human race, for its multitudes and their properties. The sages will use these concepts in order to reveal the hidden sources of the Torah, its way and its ultimate purposewhich is the wisdom of faith [*Hohmat haEmunah*] (Translation mine)

5. Judah Leo Landau, *Nachman Krochmal, ein Hegelianer* (Berlin; S. Calvary, 1904)

6. Simon Rawidowicz, "War Nachman Krochmal ein Hegelianer?" *Hebrew Union College Annual,* vol. 5 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1928). Translated by Helen Lederer as "Was Nachman Krochmal a

Hegelian?" in Simon Rawidowicz, *Studies in Jewish Thought* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974).

7. Julius Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 367f., 521-2; and in his essay, "Yesodoth haMahashavah shel Rabbi Nachman Krochmal," *Knesset,* 6 (1941).

8. Guttmann, *Philosophies of Judaism,* p. 367.

9. See, for example, Israel Zinberg, *A History of Jewish Literature,* vol. 10 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1977), pp. 70-71.

10. Krochmal, *Guide to the Perplexed,* 7: p. 20f.

11. Ibid., 14: p. 183f.

12. Ibid., 7.

13. Ibid., 6: p. 17f.

Chapter Four
Hegel and the Reformation

Merold Westphal

We stand between two anniversaries. Last year was the sesquicentennial of Hegel's death. Next year will be the fifth centenary of Luther's birth. The meaning of the relation of these two giants of the Western tradition is a question posed, of course, not by the accidental juxtaposition of dates, but by the self-confessed Protestantism of Hegel's mature thought. It makes sense to ask, with Karl Barth, "Why did Hegel not become for the Protestant world something similar to what Thomas Aquinas was for Roman Catholicism?"

1 One way to seek a deeper understanding of Hegel's thought and of its claims upon us today would be to seek to answer that question.

But the question poses a prior task, I believe, for those of us who seek to come to grips with Hegel. It is the task of understanding the essentially Protestant nature of his thought, of understanding how something very like becoming a Protestant Aquinas lies at the heart of the Hegelian project. For, while Hegel is by no means the first to whom the ever problematic concept 'Christian philosopher' can be applied, however problematically, he is the first to lay claim to the even more troublesome title of 'Protestant philosopher.' While a great deal of discussion has been generated from the very first about the relation of Hegel's philosophy to the Christian faith in general, far less attention has been paid to that philosophy's professed Protestantism and its understanding of the Reformation's role in spirit's path to freedom. These are not two separate questions. The Protestant character of Hegel's own philosophy of spirit and his view of the world-historical import of the Reformation are two sides of the same coin. For his philosophy is essentially historical, the attempt to comprehend his own time in thought.

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In this context, of course, Protestant means Lutheran. Speaking of the view that "the active subjective Spirit is that which comprehends the divine, and in its comprehension of it it is itself the divine Spirit," Hegel says, "We LutheransI am a Lutheran and will remain the samehave only this original faith."

2 Luther would surely be surprised to be associated with this conflation of the human and divine spirits, but we are well reminded that "when Hegel claims to be a Lutheran Christian, one can certainly question whether his position really deserves this description, but not that he truly thought so himself."3

It was not always so. It is the Hegel of Heidelberg and Berlin, but not of Tübingen, Berne, Frankfurt, or even Jena who thinks of himself as a Protestant philosopher. In his so-called early theological writings, Hegel is hostile to the Christian religion as such.4 Instead of being a folk religion that celebrates life, firing the imagination without offending enlightened reason, both Protestant and Catholic forms of the faith are corrupted by positivity and dualism. In some passages he takes special aim at Catholicism.5 More frequently his target is the Protestantism by which he was more closely surrounded.6 But both are seriously marred by the positivity that results in denial of civil fights to dissenters;7 and it is over both branches of Christendom that he pronounces his sad verdict at the end of "The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate." "In all the forms of the Christian religion which have been developed in the advancing fate of the ages, there lies this fundamental characteristic of opposition in the divine which is supposed to be present in consciousness only, never in life…. And it is its fate that church and state, worship and life, piety and virtue, spiritual and worldly action, can never dissolve into one.8

The Jena period culminates in the *Phenomenology* and its affirmation of Christianity as the revealed religion that underlies absolute knowing. But while we now have a Christian philosopher on our hands, in some sense, we can scarcely be said to have a Protestant philosopher. In *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel described the critical finitism and subjectivism of Kant, Jacobi, Fichte, and Schleiermacher, whose overcoming is the central task of

true philosophy, as an expression of Protestantism.[9] And in a fragment from about the same time, preserved only in Rosenkranz's account, we hear of a new religion to be generated by philosophy to replace both Catholic and Protestant forms of religion.[10] The eschatological culmination described and celebrated in the *Phenomenology* is not only postbourgeois, but also post-Protestant.[11] These conclusions are surprising only if the *Phenomenology* is read against the background of Hegel's subsequent, rather than antecedent, writings.

We meet the truly Protestant Hegel only in the *Encyclopedia* and in

the great lecture series on philosophy, religion, and history. The earliest Hegel only hesitatingly acknowledges that Luther is a national hero (for lack of any others), and immediately goes on to ask, referring to the Reformation, ”Apart from the usual annual readings of the Augsburg Confession in some Protestant churches (readings usually wearisome to every hearer) and apart from the dull sermon which follows these, what is the festival which celebrates the memory of this event?”

12 The later Hegel has an entirely different view of the Augsburg Confession and the Reformation it symbolizes. On the three hundredth birthday of the Augsburg Confession, in 1830, Hegel was called upon as Rector of the University of Berlin to give a speech in honor of the occasion. He began it with praise for the princes and mayors, that is, the lay political leaders who ratified the Confession, for the “immortal deed,” the “memorable work” by which “they have obtained this priceless freedom for us all,” namely the freedom of the laity from blind obedience to the clergy in matters of faith. In this ecumenical age we would prefer that Hegel’s new pro-Protestant posture be unaccompanied by strident anti-Catholic rhetoric of the sort familiar to us from the pen of Luther himself. But on this point, at least, Hegel represents a kind of repristination of Lutheranism.13

Whenever Hegel talks about the Reformationand he does so in a variety of settingsand regardless of whether his tone is affirmative or polemical, he clusters his remarks around two points. The first is the dispute over the meaning of the Eucharist, and the second is the Protestant replacement of the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience with the affirmation of the realm Hegel calls *Sittlichkeit,* participation in the familial, economic, and political institutions of modem society. As we shall see, the theme of the priesthood of every believer, with which Hegel begins his address on the Augsburg Confession, is intimately connected with the first of these two focuses. I turn now to each of them in turn.

Hegel’s Ambiguity in Defining the Protestant Principle

The general schema of world history as the progress of the consciousness of freedom from one to some to all is familiar enough. While the Greeks and

Romans knew that some (citizens) were free, they thought that others (slaves) were not entitled to be. It was with Christianity that the freedom of all was first recognizedin principle, it must be added, since slavery did not by any means disappear immediately. But this Christian principle first comes to real fruition in real life with the Reformation. “The *Germanic* nations within Christendom were the first to realize that man as man is free, and that freedom of the spirit is his very essence.”[14] The reformation derives

its world-historical import from this single fact. “This is the essence of the Reformation: man is the inner intention to be free.”

15

But if freedom is to be more than a *Stichwort,* it must be defined more precisely. The point of departure for getting specific is regularly the difference between the Catholic and Lutheran understandings of the Eucharist, which Hegel takes to be the continental divide between Catholic and Protestant experience. “Luther therefore could not do otherwise than refuse to yield an iota in regard to that doctrine of the Eucharist in which the whole question is concentrated.”16

If Hegel finds that everything objectionable about Catholicism flows from its theology of the Eucharist, the fatal flaw of that doctrine can be expressed in a single term, externality (Ä*usserlichkeit*). The term has much the same meaning as ‘positivity’ in the early theological writings. Three aspects of its meaning need to be noted.

1. The host itself, as God presented to religious adoration, is an external thing.17 What the church offers as “the specific and definite embodiment of Deity which it recognizes” is something “sensuous,” something “external in a coarse material form,” so that we have the immediacy of “sensuous subjectivity not yet transfigured from the sensible to the spiritual.”18 To put the point as crudely as possible (Is Hegel quoting Luther himself here?), in the Catholic church “the Host is honoured even as an external thing; thus if a mouse eats of the Host, both it and its excrements are reverenced.”19

2. If it be replied that the Host is not just any old bread and wine, but elements that have been consecrated and thus transfigured from the sensible to the spiritual, Hegel replies that this only brings to light another dimension of externality, that of the clergy who consecrate to the laity who partake. Because “the True is represented as something fixed and external…. which has a definite existence outside of the subject, it can come to be in the power of others; the Church is in possession of it as it is of all the means of grace.”20

3. The status of the believer corresponds to this double externality of the sacred, “which is the basis of the whole Catholic religion. There arises from this a slavishness of knowledge and action… the subject is in this respect something passive and receptive which does not know what is true, fight, and good, but has to accept it merely from others.”[21] Both in doctrine and in behavior this posture of receptivity means that “obedience” is valued more than “insight.”[22]

By contrast, on the Lutheran view, consecration takes place by faith alone. On this view, “the movement starts from something external which is an ordinary common thing, but the act of communion takes place and the inner feeling of the presence of God arises to the extent to which, and in so far as, the externality is eaten not simply in a corporal fashion, but in spirit and faith. It is only in spirit and in faith

that we have the present God. The sensible presence is in itself nothing, nor does consecration make the host into an object worthy of adoration, but, on the contrary, the object exists in faith only…. This is no transubstantiationor rather, it is a transubstantiation through which what is external is transformed [*aufgehoben*], and is directly connected with the faith of the subject."

23 The immediate consequence of this is that the role of the clergy in the sacrament is dramatically subordinated. For Lutherans the host is valid "only in faith and in the actual partaking. This is its consecration in the faith and the spirituality of each one himself. The minister does nothing in particular; he does not consecrate the host, the others are only the recipients."24

Hegel is emphatic about the sweeping scope of the issue at hand. It is not a matter merely of how the sacrament is to be understood, but of how an entire life-world is to be shaped. So he says of the Lutheran view, "Diese Entfernung der Äusserlichkeit rekonstruiert alle Lehren…'25 For this reason it is important to Hegel to formulate the meaning of Luther's rejection of externality in a positive and general way. And here arises Hegel's ambiguity in defining the Protestant principle. On the one hand he formulates it as the Principle of Subjectivity, while on the other it becomes the Principle of Autonomy.

The ambiguity appears as early as "The Positivity of the Christian Religion," that is, before Hegel is a self-confessed Lutheran thinker. At first the emphasis is on the personal, inward involvement of the believer. "Thus the faith of every individual Protestant must be his faith because it is his, not because it is the church's."26 While this involves a reinterpreting of ecclesiastical authority, it does not involve its entire demise. "All the rights which the church has over him rest solely on the fact that its faith is also his faith." But soon he notes with approval that "great men have claimed that the fundamental meaning of 'Protestant' is a man or a church which has not bound itself to certain unalterable standards of faith but which protests against all authority in matters of belief…."27

Hegel's mature formulations of the Subjectivity Principle would have pleased even Kierkegaard. "In the Lutheran Church the subjective feeling and the conviction of the individual is regarded as equally necessary with the objective side of Truth. Truth with Lutherans is not a finished and completed thing; the subject himself must be imbued with Truth, surrendering his particular being in exchange for the substantial Truth, and making that Truth his own. Thus subjective Spirit gains emancipation in the Truth, abnegates its particularity and comes to itself in realizing the truth of its being." To be sure we don't read this praise of subjectivity as subjectivism, Hegel immediately adds, "If Subjectivity be placed in feeling only,

without that objective side, we have the stand-point of the merely Natural Will."

28

In another formulation of the same theme, Lutheran faith sees the believer as standing "in a relation to God which involves his personal existence: that is, his piety and the hope of his salvation and the like all demand that his heart, his subjectivity, should be present in them. His feelings, his faith, the inmost certainty of himself, in short, all that belongs to him is laid claim to, and this alone can truly come under consideration: man must himself repent from-his heart and experience contrition; his own heart must be filled with the Holy Ghost. Thus here the principle of subjectivity, of pure relation to me personally, i.e., freedom, is recognized, and not merely so, but it is clearly demanded that in religious worship this alone should be considered. The highest confirmation of the principle is that it alone has value in the eyes of God, that faith and the subjection of the individual heart are alone essential: in this way this principle of Christian freedom is first presented and brought to a true consciousness." Here, again, the reminder of the importance of objectivity is not long delayed. "Truth is what it is in *my* mind; and, on the other hand, my spirit is only then in its proper attitude to truth when truth is within it, when the spirit and its content are related thus. One cannot be isolated from the other."29

Needless to say, Hegel does not waver from this commitment to the objectivity of truth. But alongside those formulations of the Protestant principle that confer upon each individual the responsibility for judging what is true and right and making it a self-transforming personal possession, we find formulations that go beyond this in making the individual's reason the criterion or standard by which the judgment is to be made, making Protestantism indeed to be the faith "which protests against all authority…." Thus the claim "that man's salvation is his own affair" does not only mean that it requires "no mediation of priests having the so-called means of grace within their hands." It also means that "on the side of knowledge man turned back *into himself* from the beyond of authority; and reason was recognized as the absolutely universal, and hence as divine."30

The same motifs recur whenever Hegel formulates the Protestant principle as the Principle of Autonomy:

> Thus ultimately, in the Protestant conscience the principles of the religious and of the ethical conscience come to be one and the same: *the free spirit learning to see itself in its reasonableness and truth.*[31]

> But there lived in the German world an entirely new Spirit, through which the world was to be regenerated namely free

> Spirit, which rests on its own self, *the absolute self-will* [*Eigensinn*] *of subjectivity.*
>
> 32

> It is a great obstinancy [*Eigensinn*], an obstinancy which does honor to mankind, to refuse to recognize in conviction anything not ratified by thought. This obstinancy is the characteristic of our epoch, besides being the principle peculiar to Protestantism. What Luther initiated as faith in feeling and the witness of the spirit, is precisely what spirit, since become more mature, has striven to apprehend in the concept….33

Perhaps the most striking formulation of all is the one which treats Luther and Descartes as two sides of the same coin.

> After Neo-Platonism… it is not until Descartes is arrived at that we really enter upon a philosophy which is, properly speaking, independent, which knows that it comes forth from reason as independent…. In this new period the universal principle by means of which everything in the world is regulated, is the thought that proceeds from itself; it is a certain inwardness, which is above all evidenced in respect to Christianity, and which is the Protestant principle in accordance with which thought has come to the consciousness of the world at large as that to which every man has a claim. Thus because the independently existent thought, this culminating point of inwardness, is now set forth and firmly grasped, the dead externality of authority is set aside and regarded as out of place.34

In his Gifford Lectures, William Temple makes the same assimilation:

> This strong assertion of the individual as the source of medium of the authority to which he must bow found its spiritual expression when Martin Luther, standing alone for the truth as he knew it before the Diet of Worms, declared *Hier steh'ich: ich kann nichts anders.* It found its intellectual expression in the course of meditation with which Rene Descartes occupied his leisure in that stove which is the birthplace of modern philosophy.35

The good Archbishop and the great philosopher should have known better. For the sake of intellectual honesty they should have paid more attention to how surprised Luther would have been to find himself thus linked with Descartes, especially as Hegel interprets the Cartesian principle. It is hard to imagine anyone less Cartesian than Luther at the Diet of Worms. His defiant response can well be taken

as grounded in the Principle of Subjectivity, refusing to turn over his conscience to the authority of the church. But it is entirely antithetical to the Principle of Autonomy. For, the reason he refuses to move from where he stands and claims that he cannot do otherwise is, he says, "I am *bound* by the texts of the Bible, *my conscience is captive* to the Word of God…."

36 For Luther, liberty of conscience is anything but the protest against all authority. It is freedom from human authority in order to be subject to divine authority as expressed in the teachings of Scripture. That is something very different from all Hegel's formulations of the Protestant principle (as what I have called the Principle of Autonomy.

The difference can be expressed in this way. For Luther, the principle *sola fide* is intimately connected with two other principles, *sola scriptura* and *sola gratia.* According to the former, the individual is dependent upon divine authority in the cognitive realm. According to the latter, the individual is dependent upon divine help in the existential realm. But for Hegel, dependence and receptivity are marks of that externality which is the denial of freedom. So he breaks the link between *sola fide* and the other two principles; he then reduces its meaning to make it synonymous with the priesthood of every believer and, finally, expands this principle to make it into the Cartesian-Enlightenment principle of human autonomy. Hegel's account of the Reformation ends up as a paean to Reason, whereas Luther is more apt to speak of reason with the same spicy rhetoric he applies to the Pope.37

There seem to me to be three problems arising out of Hegel's ambiguous definition of the Protestant principle. First, there is the issue of intellectua1 honesty or hermeneutical humility. What Hegel cele-grates as the Principle of Autonomy is a viewpoint, even a life-world, significantly at odds with the self-understanding of Luther. Hegel is, of course, under no obligation to treat the self-understanding of a rebellious sixteenth-century monk as normative for his own life and thought. But however pressing the need to bridge the gap between sacred and secular in modern culture, there can be no justification for presenting the Enlightenment Principle of Autonomy as if it were the principle of the Reformation. The differences are too deep to

be papered over so easily.[38] That fusion of horizons which involves both understanding and an openness to the claims of what is historically distant is not well served by obliterating the distance at the outset. To use an Hegelian metaphor, that would be an attempt to achieve the hermeneutical goal like a shot from a pistol.

The second problem concerns the Principle of Subjectivity. By failing to distinguish it clearly from the Principle of Autonomy and by giving such prominence to the latter, Hegel gives short shrift to his

own Principle of Subjectivity, both in terms of its content and in terms of its importance. In doing so he cheats both himself and us. He lays himself open to the Kierkegaardian charge that in his fear of subiectivism he has allowed subiectivity to be swallowed up in obiectivity, though this does not correspond to his deepest intentions. It is clearly his view that philosophy concerns itself with the kind of truth that should transform our personal existence and that we are not merely to make the truth our own, as if we owned it, but that in doing so we are to "surrender" and "abnegate" our particular, natural selfhood in the realization that the truth owns us and has a rightful claim over our whole life.

39

In a day when philosophy has been so largely given over to gamesmanship and intramural nitpicking (and the "analytic" tradition by no means has a monopoly on this), the Principle of Subjectivity and the deeply spiritual conception of philosophy it presupposes need to be unambiguously championed by all those who, by remaining faithful to them, can rightfully claim to be intellectual heirs of Socrates. There are those of our contemporaries who, for reasons of temperament, simply cannot hear the point from the pen of Kierkegaard, or who, preferring in bad faith not to get the point, find him all too easy to dismiss because of his emotional intensity or apparently unsystematic procedure. Hegel's challenge to contemporary philosophy to be *systematic* stands strong. It would have been matched with an even more important challenge (in partnership with Kierkegaard) to contemporary philosophy to be *serious,* if Hegel had not allowed his own Principle of Subjectivity to be so largely pre-empted by his preoccupation with autonomy.

The third problem concerns the Principle of Autonomy itself. In one of the passages in which Hegel takes note of the differences between the Reformation and the Enlightenment, rather than conflating them, he expresses the Principle of Autonomy this way, "But in Thought, Self moves within the limits of its own sphere…. This is utter and absolute Freedom, for the pure Ego, like pure light, is with itself alone."40 But it is Hegel, ironically, who has exposed the paradox of absolute freedom better than

most. In two familiar chapters of the *Phenomenology,* he first inserts his knife into the pretensions of absolute freedom, and then twists it. In "The law of the heart and the frenzy of self-conceit," he offers a critique no less powerful for being somewhat patronizing. But, in "Absolute Freedom and Terror," he does a devastatingly destructive job on the devastatingly destructive results of trying to make Absolute Freedom a reality rather than just a slogan. If, as Hegel tells us, Autonomy is Absolute Freedom and Absolute Freedom is what he portrays it to be in the *Phenomenology,* then modernity, in so far as it grounds itself on the Principle

of Autonomy, can be nothing but the road to hell and holocaust. In our own time, Camus has suggested that this is precisely the case, applying as it were the analysis of the *Phenomenology* to

post-Hegelian experience.

41 What we have inherited from Hegel and our own history is perhaps less an ambiguity than a dilemma, that the Principle of Autonomy is hard to deny, but even harder to live with. Unfortunately, Hegel seems to have been unaware of the sharpness with which his own writing poses this dilemma.

Hegel's Ambition in Developing the Protestant Principle

It would surely not be a way out of the problem posed above, to suggest that Hegel praises Autonomy as Absolute Freedom in the realm of theory, but criticizes it in the realm of practice. For the second major motif of Hegel's appreciation of the Reformation is its worldliness, its belief that "the present world was again present to man as worthy of the interests of mind."42 At issue is not only whether the *Jenseits* is the source and norm of all that is spiritually valuable; it is also a question of whether the only proper locus of spiritual enjoyment and fulfillment is the *Jenseits* of the past, of the future, or of private inwardness.43

Hegel saw Protestantism as the affirmation of the public present, and the central expression of this is the turning away from the monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience.

> From the Beyond man was thus called [by the Reformation] into the presence of spirit, as earth and her bodily objects, human virtues and morality, the individual heart and conscience, began to have some value to him. In the church, if marriage was not held to be immoral, self-restraint and celibacy were considered higher, but now marriage came to be looked on as a divine institution. Then poverty was esteemed better than possession, and to live on alms was considered higher than to support oneself honestly by the work of one's hands; now, however, it becomes known that poverty is not the most moral life, for this last consists in living by one's work and taking pleasure in the fruits thereof. The blind obedience by which human freedom was suppressed, was the third vow taken by the monks, as against which freedom, like marriage and property, was now also recognized as divine.44

This theme is as fundamental as the doctrine of the Eucharist, and it would be fair to say that, whereas most Protestant interpretations of the

Reformation see the issue of justification by faith alone as the central issue, Hegel views it as an ellipse whose two foci are the consecration of the Host by faith alone and the repudiation of the

three monastic vows along with the life-world they symbolize.

On this latter point Hegel tends to remind us more consistently of the gap between the Reformation, where the worldliness of freedom is first proclaimed, and the eighteenth century developments in which this promise comes to fulfillment. As early as *Faith and Knowledge* he writes, speaking of the Enlightenment, "The beautiful subjectivity of Protestantism is transformed into empirical subjectivity; the poetry of Protestant grief that scorns all reconciliation with empirical existence is transformed into the prose of satisfaction with the finite and of good conscience about it."

45 But it is not the Enlightenment as such which "completed the Reformation that Luther began."46 It was necessary to go beyond "the abstract metaphysic of Descartes" and the "tranquil theory" of Kantian moral philosophy to give "practical effect" to Enlightenment ideas. This the French did in their Revolution.47

What the Reformation, along with its development in the Enlightenment and French Revolution, means for the sphere of public practice is that:

> the principle of freedom has forced its way into secular life; and since secular life so constructed is itself in conformity with the concept, reason, truth, eternal truth, it is a freedom which has become concrete, the rational will…. The true reconciliation whereby the Divine realises itself in the region of reality is found in the moral and legal life in the state; this is the true disciplining of secular life.48

It is precisely this reconciliation of sacred and secular flowing from the Reformation whose absence from both Catholic and Protestant forms of religious life Hegel found to be their Achilles heel, in his early theological writings. Instead of that "atheism of the ethical world" [*Atheismus der sittlichen Welt*] of which he speaks in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right,* Protestant modernity affirms that "the principles of the religious and of the ethical [*sittlichen*] conscience come to be one and the same…. The ethical life [*Sittlichkeit*] of the state and the religious spirituality of the state are thus reciprocal guarantees of strength."49

This reconciliation is by no means to be identified with the peaceful coexistence of a church and state hostile or indifferent to one another but

agreeing to live and let live. It is an interpenetration in which religion is the foundation [*Grundlage*], but only the foundation, of the state. It is an essence that must pass over into existence "on earth, unfolding itself to be the actual shape and organization of a world."[50] The crucial middle term here is *Sittlichkeit,* that network of public (that is, nonsectarian) social institutions which is nevertheless to be neither explained nor legitimated in utilitarian or functional terms but only as the outward embodiment of moral values. For Hegel nothing is

more basic than that this ethical life "is the state retracted into its inner heart and substance, while the state is the organization and actualization of ethical life; and that religion is the very substance of ethical life itself and [thus] of the state. At this rate, the state rests on ethical conviction [*Gesinnung*], which in turn rests on the religious."

51

Whatever the ambiguity involved in the Principle of Autonomy as part of Hegel's interpretation of modernity, it is clear that his view of a Protestant society "is by no means a one-sided secularization of what was formerly sacred."52 It is, rather, a challenge to that unholy conspiracy, described so forcefully in later times by Martin Buber, (in *The Prophetic Faith*), between the priest who buys the king's support by keeping religion out of politics, and the king who buys religious legitimation for his secular policies by lending the authority and resources of the throne to such piety. As Hegel understands it, Protestantism calls religion from the isolation of inwardness or other-worldliness to worldly involvement; and it calls society from secular self-sufficiency to a serious search for it ethical and religious foundations. For there can be no revolution without a reformation.53 Neither an apolitical religion nor an atheistic and amoral politics is acceptable.

That this dual challenge defines no easy task becomes clearer when we note two modes of religion's active involvement in public life that it is meant to exclude, theocracy and civil religion. Hegel is explicit about the nontheocratic nature of his intentions. It is inappropriate for the church to dictate public policy to the state, simply because the rights and duties of public life belong to each human being as such, and a sectarian state would of necessity violate this principle. For Hegel, the concept of a Christian or Jewish or Islamic state is a contradiction in terms.54

It is perhaps even more important to stress, since Hegel is less overt about it (but unambiguous, I believe), that Protestantism is not to be understood as civil religion. I mean this term in its primary contemporary usage, according to which it is more or less indistinguishable from God-and-country patriotism. Far from being apolitical, this kind of religion is very

much involved in public affairs, but only as the uncritical conveyor of divine blessing upon the present (or recent past) division of power and privilege. It is quite simply what Marx calls ideology.

Hegel's Marxist critics have tended to argue that both Hegel's philosophy itself and the relation of religion to society as he presents it have an ideological character, serving as the rationalizations of social practices that do not conform with the ideals of liberty and justice for all, even in Hegel's own best formulation of those ideals. But this is

not the case for the simple reason that Hegel views modernity as having received from Protestantism *a task that remains uncompleted.* Speaking of the Reformation, and the principle of spirit's freedom, he writes, "Time from then until now has and has had no other work to do than to bring the world into conformity with this principle, so that the potential reconciliation and truth also receive the form of objectivity."

55 To underscore the present and unfinished nature of this task, Hegel immediately proceeds in the imperative and subjunctive moods. "Law, property, ethical life, government, constitution, etc., must [*müssen*] be conformed to general principles, in order that they may conform with the concept of free will and be rational." Even when speaking of the French Revolution, he writes, "Anaxagoras had been the first to say that *nous* governs the world; but not until now had man advanced to the recognition of the principle that thought ought [*solle*] to govern spiritual reality. This was accordingly a glorious dawn…. Emotions of a lofty character stirred in men's minds at that time; a spiritual enthusiasm thrilled through the world, as if the reconciliation between the Divine and the secular was now first accomplished."56 In short, while the principle of freedom and rationality is for Hegel and his contemporaries a matter of historical heritage, freedom is still to be won and the world is not yet rational. It may well be true that the Kingdom of God and the ethical [*sittliche*] world are "one idea"; but from the perspective of time there is only the struggle to bring this unity to pass.57

Hegel is not prepared to derive a revolutionary praxis from these imperatives in the manner of the French, American, or Marxist revolutionaries. He does not believe the ought is a mere mental figment with no power of its own to affect reality; nor does he believe individuals or political parties can take over the task of steering history without inviting catastrophe.58 But these passages, along with the notably gloomy endings to the *Philosophy of Religion* and the *Philosophy of History,* indicate quite clearly that Hegel did not take the task of bringing the social world into harmony with the religious idea to be in any sense completed.59

The point of these remarks is not to defend Hegel against his critics. There

are more important tasks than defending the dead. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which he has struggled so mightily to define. As Gadamer puts it, “There is no question of Hegel discipleship, but of interiorizing the challenge that he represents.” For Gadamer, this means that Hegel’s notorious identification of the real with the rational “articulates a task for each individual rather than a legitmation for the inactivity of us all.”[60]

It is the magnitude of this task that leads me to speak of Hegel’s ambition in developing the Protestant principle. For the Protestant

project, as we might refer to this aspect of Hegel's thought, is a project every bit as ambitious as that of nuclear disarmament. It has been on the agenda for quite a bit longer than the disarmament project, but is just as far from completion. It can be most simply defined as providing a religious and moral but nonsectarian foundation for social life, making reality rather than nostalgia or utopia out of Hegel's concept of *Sittlichkeit.*

In our own day we have reason to be disturbed by the rise of popular movements that combine a theocratic approach to a variety of moral issues under the general heading of the family with the loud blessings of civil religion on the essentially secular military and economic postures of a nation which wants to maintain a monopoly of power and wealth. We have just as much reason, I believe, to be dismayed by the secularized society to which these movements are a response. This society not only identifies the good with power, pleasure, and wealth, but in doing so adopts a wholly instrumentalized concept of reason, reducing morality to the single maxim that the end justifies the means.

Hegel's ambitious interpretation of the Reformation puts before us the relatively easy task of saying no to these alternatives and the extraordinarily difficult task of finding an alternative.

Hegel had already seen for himself that the Enlightenment dream of a religion and morality based on a reason free of historical conditioning, and thus of all positivity, was an exercise in abstract thinking and self-deception. His own concept of an historically grounded reason that transcends the finitude of its perspective by being the reflection of the Kingdom of God on earth presupposes a realized eschatology. That is, it makes sense only to the degree that that kingdom has come and provides only the most general guidance to those for whom the identity of reality with rationality remains primarily a task.

But this means only that Hegel no more provides us with recipes for completing the task than he promises us rest in a world already completed. It is perhaps the greatness of his interpretation of the Reformation that, instead of either of these, he so clearly defines the perennial task from which it would be as foolish for us to rest as it would be to trust in recipes.

Notes

I have made reference to English translations whenever possible, occasionally making minor changes in the translation. Where the changes appear to me to be substantive I have commented on them and given the German text.

1. Karl Barth, *Protestant Thought: From Rousseau to Ritschl,* trans. B. Cozens and J. Hartwell (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), p. 268.

2. *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* trans. E. S. Haldane (New York: Humanities Press, 1963), 1: 73 (hereafter cited as *HP*).

3. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 486. For one expression of the view that one can only speak in a "very attenuated sense" of Hegel's Protestantism, see Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: the Revolution in Nineteenth Century Thought,* trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 19-20. On page 34, he adds, "For Luther, the content of the Christian faith was determined by revelation; through Rousseau's mediation, in the French Revolution [which Hegel treats as the fulfillment of the Reformation] the European spirit determined for itself the content of its goal."

4. The one exception is the Jesus he seeks to save from his followers, sometimes a Kantian moralist, at other times a pantheistically oriented humanist.

5. *On Christianity: Early Theological Writings,* trans. T. M. Knox and R. Kroner (New York: Harper and Bros, 1948), pp. 131, 141 (hereafter cited as *ETW*).

6. See Merold Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1979), p. 48, and the passages cited in notes 75-78. Also see *ETW,* pp. 117-23. In the fragments, "Volksreligion und Christentum," by H. Nohl, in *Hegels Theologische Jugendschiften* (Tübingen: J. B. C. Mohr; 1907), p. 42, Hegel writes, "How far Luther was, for example, from the idea of worshipping God in spirit and in truth is clear from his dismal disputes with Zwingli, Oecolampadius, *etc.* He denied to spiritual authorities the power to rule through force and over the pocketbook, but he wanted to retain authority over people's beliefs."

7. *ETW*, pp. 93, 105-7, 110, 113-4. In the drafts now known as "The German Constitution," Hegel reiterates this point, noting that sometimes practice was better than constitution. He also repudiates the corresponding principle in the Peace of Westphalia, *cuius regio eius religio,* and notes the role of the sectarian Thirty Years War in Germany's disunity. See *Hegel's Political Writings,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

1964), pp. 189-92. These drafts were begun in Frankfurt and continued in Jena.

8. *ETW*, p. 301. For the difference between the "early" young Hegel, concerned for religious liberty and the separation of church from state, and the "late" young Hegel, concerned for uniting sacred and secular, see Merold Westphal, "Hegel, Tillich, and the Secular," *The Journal of Religion* 52, no. 3 (July 1972): pp. 223-4.

9. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge,* trans. W. Cerf and H. Harris (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1977), p. 57.

10. Karl Rosenkranz, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegels Leben* (Darmstadt: 1963), pp. 139-41.

11. This is argued in Westphal, *History and Truth,* ch. 2. I find the case entirely convincing.

12. *ETW,* pp. 146-7. He adds: "It looks as if the authorities in church and state were content that the memory of how our forefathers had a sense of this right [to make reforms in relgion], how thousands could stake their lives

to vindicate it, should slumber in our hearts and not be retained in any living fashion."

13. Hegel's address can be found in *Berliner Schriften: 1818-1831,* ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1956), quotations, pp. 31, 33 (hereafter cited as *BS*). For examples of Hegel's anti-Catholic rhetoric, see pp. 35, 49 of Hegel's address, and the following:*HP,* 3: 389; *The Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 412, 449 (hereafter cited as *PH*); and *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind,* trans. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 285 (hereafter cited as *PM*).

14. *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Introduction: Reason in History,* trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 54 (Hegel's emphasis). The German text in the Hoffmeister edition, *Die Vermunft in der Geschichte* (Hamburg: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1955), which Nisbet uses, reads, "Erst die *germanischen* Nationen sind im Christendom zum Be-wusstsein gekommen, dass der Mensch als Mensch frei ist, die Freiheit des Geistes seine eigenste Natur ausmacht." I have modified Nisbet's translation, which reads, "The *Germanic* nations, with the rise of Christianity, were the first…." Sibree renders the same passage, from an earlier German text, "The German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first…." (*PH,* p. 18). Both Nisbet's "with the rise of Christianity" and Sibree's "under the influence of Christianity" call attention to the influence of Christianity on the Germanic nations. The thrust of Hegel's "Erst die germanischen Nationen … im Christendom" seems to me to emphasize a different aspect of the matter, that the German nations were the *first* to understand the Christian meaning of human freedom.

In reference to the question of Hegel's nationalism and the subsequent "German Christian" phenomenon under the Third Reich, it is worth noting here that "German" is essentially synonymous with "Protestant," not with "German-speaking." That the concluding section of *The Philosophy of History,* "The German World," refers to the northern, Protestant nations of Europe has been pointed out by Walter Kaufmann, in *Hegel's Political Philosophy* (New York: Atherton Press, 1970), p. 6, and by W. H. Walsh in

"Principle and Prejudice in Hegel's Philosophy of History," in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives,* ed. Z. A. Pelczynski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 183.

15. *PH,* p. 417. The German reads, "der Mensch ist durch sich selbst bestimmt, frei zu sein." Especially against the background of Luther's doctrine of Christian calling or vocation, it seems to me necessary to read *bestimmen zu* as intention rather than as destiny. The "durch sich selbst," which Luther would surely have had trouble with, seems to imply self-determination rather than mere essence. So I've altered Sibree's translation, which reads, "Man is in his very nature destined to be free."

16. *PH,* p. 415.

17. *PM,* p. 284. (All quotations from *PM* are from paragraph 552 of the *Encyclopedia.*)

18. *PH,* pp. 412-3.

19. *HP,* 3: 54-55.

20. *Hegel's Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,* trans. E. B. Spiers and J. B.

Sanderson (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 3: 133 (hereafter cited as *PR*).

21. *PR,* 3: 133. On spiritual slavery, cf. *PM,* pp. 284-5. That the difference between Catholic and Protestant involves both theory and practice, theology and ethics, or even politics, is also expressed in *HP,* 3: 147, and *PH,* pp. 413-4.

22. *The Christian Religion,* ed. and trans. Peter Hodgson (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979), p. 271 (hereafter cited as *CR*). This is a different edition of the portion of *PR* devoted to Christianity as the absolute religion.

23. *PR,* 3: 133-4. For other formulations of this consecration by faith alone theme, see *HP,* 3: 54, 149; *PM,* pp. 284-5; and *HP,* p. 415. In both *PR* and *CR,* Hegel also distinguishes the Lutheran view from the "Reformed" view, which he criticizes for giving up the "mystical" element in the sacrament, the real presence of Christ, by reducing the rite to a memorial. He evidently has the Zwinglian view in mind rather than the Calvinist, which retains the concept of real presence.

24. *CR,* pp. 271-2.

25. See *PH,* p. 415.

26. *ETW,* p. 121.

27. *ETW,* p. 128. Cf. p. 71, where he portrays Jesus as the opponent of all authority in matters of behavior.

28. *PH,* p. 416. Cf. p. 456 on the necessary balance of the subjective and objective poles.

29. *HP,* 3: 149, 152.

30. *HP,* 3: 147, (emphasis added). Cf. p. 114, where the Reformation is assimilated to the Renaissance because "its principle is simply this, that it led man back to himself…."; and p. 154, where "the basis of the Reformation is the abstract moment of a mind being within self, of freedom, of coming to self; freedom signifies the life of the spirit in being turned back within itself in the particular content which appears as another."

31. *PM,* p. 291 (emphasis added).

32. *PH,* p. 343 (emphasis added). Cf. pp. 344-5, where with reference to both theory and practice this is interpreted as the supremacy of Thought or Reason over custom and tradition.

33. *The Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 12, Preface.

34. *HP,* 3: 217-8. Cf. p. 191, where a similar passage relates the Protestant principle to Boehme.

35. *Nature, Man and God* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1960), pp. 62-63.

36. Preserved Smith, The *Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1911), p. 118 (emphasis added).

37. See, for example, his 1535 *Lectures on Galatians.*

38. Hegel is not wholly unaware of the differences, and while he all too often treats them as nonexistent, there are places where he takes note of them. Thus he overtly sides with Descartes and the Enlightenment against the earlier view that "the command of God, externally imposed as written in the Old and New Testament" should be the norm for human behavior, and he complains that the content of the salvation whose subjective appro-

priation Luther championed "was taken for granted by Luther as something already given, something revealed by religion" *PH,* pp. 440-2. And he acknowledges the importance of the Bible in Lutheran thought, but (1) he interprets this almost entirely in terms of the Bible as a "people's book," translated into their own language, without reference to its normative character (*PH,* pp. 418; *HP,* 3: 150; *PR,* 3: 81); (2) he complains about the attempt to ground theology on the kind of exegesis that seeks to make the Bible normative (*HP,* 3: 12, 151-3); and (3) he completely transforms the Lutheran teaching about the testimony of the spirit in relation to Scripture by writing, "Luther repudiated the authority of the church and set up in its stead the Bible and the testimony of the *Human* Spirit." (*PH,* p. 417, emphasis added). For Luther the testimony of the Spirit refers to the need of each individual to be dependent upon God the Holy Spirit in seeking to understand what the Bible means. It is precisely the finitude and sinfulness of the human spirit that makes this necessary. On Hegel's repudiation of exegetical theology and his reinterpretation of the witness of the Spirit, see Merold Westphal, "Hegel, Pannenberg, and Hermeneutics," *Man and World,* 4, no. 3 (August 1971): 282f. To compare a sympathetic with an unsympathetic view of Hegel's assimilation of Protestant Faith with Enlightenment Autonomy, compare Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 11 with Löwith, *Hegel to Nietzsche,* pp. 20, 34.

39. For a discussion of how Hegel remains vulnerable to Kierkegaardian criticism in spite of his clear affirmation of subjectivity, see Merold Westphal, "Abraham and Hegel," in *Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling: Critical Appraisals,* ed. Robert L. Perkins (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), pp. 71-72, in context of pp. 62-72.

40. *PH,* pp. 435-9. "Aber in Denken ist das Selbst sich präsent…. Das ist schlechthin die absolute Freiheit, denn das reine Ich ist, wie das reine Licht, schlechthin bei sich."

41. In *The Rebel.*

42. *HP,* 3: 159. Cf. *PH,* p. 422, where Hegel speaks of the Reformation's recognition of the secular [*das Weltliche*] as capable of being an

embodiment of the truth, whereas it had previously been regarded as evil only, incapable of good, which remained *ein Jenseits.*

43. *PR,* 3: 135.

44. *HP,* 3: 147. For other discussion of Protestantism's turning from the three monastic vows, see *PR,* 1: 251; 3: 138-9; *PM,* pp. 286-7; *PH,* pp. 380-81, 422; *BS,* pp. 45-49.

45. *Faith and Knowledge,* p. 61. For other passages in which Hegel emphasizes the difference between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, see *HP,* 3: 148-50, 159, 398; *PR,* 1: 248-50; *PH* pp. 419-24.

46. *HP,* 3: 398.

47. *HP,* 3: 385; *PH,* p. 443. For sharply contrasting interpretations of Hegel and the French Revolution, see the title essay of Joachim Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution: Essays on the Philosophy of Right,* trans. Richard Winfield (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), and "Hegel's Critique of the French Revolution," in Jürgen Habemas, *Theory and Practice,* trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973). Ritter's short essay, "Hegel and the Reformation," also appears in the former volume.

48. *PR,* 3: 138. Speaking of the sixteenth century, Hegel says: Secularity appears now as gaining a consciousness of its intrinsic worthbecomes aware of having a value of its own in human ethical life, law, personal integrity, and activity. The consciousness of independent validity is aroused through the restoration of Christian Freedom This third period of the German world extends from the Reformation to our own times…. Political life was now to be consciously regulated by reason (*PH,* pp. 344-5).

On p. 442, he speaks of secular life as the embodiment of the spiritual kingdom.

49. *PM,* p. 291. Cf. *PH,* p. 456: "… through the Protestant church the reconciliation of religion and law [*Recht*] has taken place. There is no holy, religious conscience separated from or even opposed to secular law." When Hegel expresses this, on p. 423, by saying that "Reason and the Divine commands are now synonymous," it becomes clear that the Principle of Autonomy is at work in Hegel's concept of Protestant worldliness. This statement occurs in a commentary on the rejection of the monastic vow of obedience and a Rousselian statement on political citizenship.

50. *Philosophy of Right,* remark to par. 270.

51. *PM,* p. 283. Cf. *PH,* p. 417: "This is the sense in which we must understand the state to be based on religion. States and laws are nothing else than religion manifesting itself in the relations of the actual world." Also see *BS,* p. 51.

52. Fackenheim, *Hegel's Thought,* p. 177.

53. *PM,* p. 287; *PH,* p. 453;. *BS,* pp. 39, 51.

54. See the oft-quoted passage in *Philosophy of Right,* remark to par. 209: "A man counts as a man in virtue of his manhood alone, not because he is a Jew, Catholic, Protestant, German, Italian, etc."

55. *PH,* p. 416. "Die Zeit von da zu uns hat kein anderes Werk zu tun gehabt und zu tun, als dieses Prinzip in die Welt hineinzubilden in dem die Versöhnung an sich und die Wahrheit auch objectiv wird, der form nach." Sibree's translation weakens Hegel's emphasis on the present nature of the

task by reducing his two verb tenses to one, “Time… has had no other work…” In the context of the Revolution, Ritter defines the task as “finding the legal form of freedom and… developing a legal order which accords with the freedom of selfhood and does it justice and enables the individual to be himself and achieve his human determination” (*Hegel and the French Revolution,* pp. 49-50.

56. *PH,* p. 447. In context, it is dear that the reservation expressed by the “as if” applies to the “accomplished” more than to the “first.”

57. *PH,* p. 380.

58. For discussion of the role of imperatives in Hegel’s thought, and the larger question of the relation of theory and practice, see Odo Marquard, “Hegel und das Sollen,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1964): 103-19; and Michael Theunissen, *Die Verwirklichung der Vernunft: Zur Theorie-Praxis-Discussion im Anschluss an Hegel* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck, 1970).

59. This has implications for the status of his philosophy, which presupposes the reality of the new world of spirit. The social life in which sacred and secular are unified is the existential condition for the union of thought

and life which Hegel's philosophy represents. See especially Fackenheim, pp. 208-220. But if the former unity is present only as the idea whose realization is still in process, Hegel's philosophy, like Luther's theology earlier, could only be, on Hegel's own principles, a preliminary and partial preview of what a fully true system would be. "The Owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk" (*Philosophy of Right,* Preface).

60. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science,* trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1982), pp. 50, 36. On p. 37, he adds that, since the freedom of all has come to light,

> history is not to be based upon a new principle. The principle of freedom is unimpugnable and irrevocable. It is no longer possible for anyone still to affirm the unfreedom of humanity. The principle that all are free never again can be shaken. But does this mean that on account of this, history has come to an end? Are all human beings actually free? Has not history since then been a matter of just this, that the historical conduct of man has to translate the principle of freedom into reality? Obviously this points to the unending march of world history into the openness of its future tasks and gives no becalming assurance that everything is already in order.

Comment, by David A. Duquette

I would like first to thank Professor Westphal for his very helpful and lucid discussion of Hegel's Protestant Principle. I must say that I agree in general with his assessment of the significance of the Protestant Reformation for Hegel. However, I do have some reservations concerning his critique of the use Hegel makes of the Protestant Principle of Subjectivity. I am also unsure about what Professor Westphal states are "three problems arising out of Hegel's ambiguous definition of the Protestant Principle" (p. 80). I would like to address myself to these problems, but before doing so I will summarize the more general discussion of Professor Westphal's paper concerning the ambiguity in Hegel's definition of the Protestant Principle and also suggest a reading of Hegel which, in my estimation, alleviates this ambiguity.

According to Professor Westphal, Hegel is guilty of conflating into one principle, the Protestant Principle, what are in effect two distinct principles, namely the Principle of Subjectivity and the Principle of Autonomy. That there are actually two distinct principles here is concluded from the following observations. To begin with, while for Protestantism, and specifically Luther, individual persons are viewed as having the responsibility "for judging what is true and right and making it a self-transforming personal possesson" (p. 78), nonetheless this pure relation of inwardness does not entail liberation from all external authority; rather, it constitutes "freedom from human authority in order to be subject to divine authority as expressed in the teachings. of Scripture" (p. 80). The Protestant Principle of Subjectivity, therefore, must be viewed as expressing a distinctly qualified conception of freedom of conscience.

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However, Hegel apparently incorporates into his definition of the Protestant Principle the additional claim to the individual use of reason as a standard that rejects all external authority. This is referred to by Professor Westphal as the Principle of Autonomy, and according to him it is not only different from the Principle of Subjectivity but also antithetical to the distinctly religious character of the faith it expresses: for not only does reason rather than faith and subjection of the individual heart now become the focal point of the Protestant Principle, but the positing of an absolute independence of the subjective self-will is clearly at odds with the Lutheran view of dependence on and obedience to a divine authority that is beyond reason. Indeed, Hegel himself must recognize this, and in order to rid the Principle of Subjectivity of the dependence and receptivity associated with the divine authority of Scripture and the divine dispensation of Grace, he performs a conceptual surgery of sorts on the principle in question. In Professor Westphal's words, "He breaks the link between *sola fide* and the other two principles [*sola scriptura* and *sola gratia*]; he then reduces its meaning to make it synonymous with the priesthood of every believer and, finally, expands this principle to make it into the Cartesian-Enlightenment principle of human autonomy. Hegel's account of the Reformation ends up as a paean to Reason…" (p. 80).

Now, while I agree with Professor Westphal that there is some ambiguity in Hegel's definition of the Protestant Principle, I do not think that this ambiguity is the result of Hegel's making into one principle what are in fact two principles which in some important way conflict with each other. More specifically, I am reluctant to accept the view that Hegel defines the Protestant Principle by incorporating into it a Principle of Autonomy. This view, it seems to me, does not quite square with Hegel's own recognition of the incompleteness of Protestant subjective consciousness. Let me explain.

For Hegel the Principle of Subjectivity makes its first concrete appearance in world history in the Lutheran Reformation, where Spirit comes to a "conscious reconciliation with itself."

[1] Yet despite this momentous event, the reconciliation is expressed only in immediate feeling. Thus, "it was with Luther first of all that freedom of spirit began to exist in embryo; and its form indicated that it would remain

in embryo… the unfolding of this freedom and the self-reflecting grasp of the same was a subsequent step…."[2] The further development of subjective consciousness requires that its content be extended beyond the "being-at-home-with-self" and "enjoyment of life for its own sake" which constitute the focal content of Protestant consciousness liberated from the externality of Medieval Catholicism. In order for the consciousness of reconciliation to be more than a

relation of mere immediacy it requires both a speculative development in philosophy and historical development in the world. However, in religion "all speculative content as such, as well as its developments, are at first rejected," and hence the Reformation can only serve as the point of departure for the development of the objective content of the subjective principle.

3

In a related discussion, in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (pt. 3, sec. 3), Hegel explicates the development involved in the "realization of the spiritual universal reality," and he tells us what is required in the "transformation of the Spiritual Community."[4] The first moment of the Spiritual Community is that of inner subjectivity, the content of which is mere feeling. This content remains immediate and undeveloped because of the very nature of representational thinking in which the Divine Idea is presented to subjective consciousness "as an Other outside of it which is given partly through authority and is partly appropriated in acts of devotion… the Divine Idea is not actually seen, but is only represented in the mind."[5] Thus, the religious reconciliation in feeling and emotion in which the presence of God is enjoyed remains abstract insofar as God continues to reside in a heaven beyond the present such that His presence is not ac-tualized in the world.

Despite this deficiency of a purely religious reconciliation, according to Hegel "the principles which apply to this worldly element actually exist in this spiritual element."[6] If I read Hegel correctly, the principles he is referring to do not concern the independent use of reasonthe principle of the rational willbut rather concern the principle of the infinity of the subject, which arises when man is brought into harmony with the spirit of God. Here we have the recognition that "the subject as an object of divine grace, as a being who is reconciled with God, has an infinite value by the very character which is essentially his and which is further developed in the Spiritual Community."[7] Hegel refers to this "subjectivity which is at home with itself" as the "substantial element" which forms the basis for the relation of the Spiritual Community to its worldly element. Here "the

rationality, the freedom of the subject means that the subject is this something which has been freed and has attained to this condition of freedom through religion, that it is essentially free in virtue of its religious character."[8] It is only after the religious reconciliation makes its mark in the worldly sphere that the subjective freedom of religious consciousness becomes concrete in the principle of the rational will, and it is only in virtue of this subsequent development that "thought enters in and destroys and bids defiance to externality in whatever form it may appear."[9]

Now if we keep in mind Hegel's distinction between the strictly

religious reconciliation in Spirit on the one hand, and its worldly counterpart on the other, then I believe that we can read Hegel's various statements concerning the reason that is inherent in Protestantism without confronting an antithesis in the definition of the Protestant Principle. First, the reason that is involved in the religious reconciliation is for Hegel clearly not concerned with the claim to the independent use of reason by the individual; for, if it were, the content of the religious subjective consciousness would be developed in a manner obviously at odds with Hegel's own assessment here, that is, that the content is expressed solely in feeling and representational form rather than in terms of objective reason. The reason which Hegel discovers in religious subjective conscious appears not in virtue of an objective content, which remains undeveloped, but simply in virtue of the fact that Spirit becomes reconciled with itself in the consciousness of the infinite value of the individual subject *per se.*

10 This seems to me to be the core of the Principle of Subjectivity for Hegel, and I believe that it is unambiguous as it stands. Secondly, it is on the basis of this freedom of reason which is won in religion that the Principle of Subjectivity forces itself into secular life, and it is then, and only then, that we have a context for speaking of the principle of the rational will. Now, if we view both the elements of religious reconciliation and worldly development together as part of the Protestant life-world, and if the Protestant Principle is intended to represent this life-world, then indeed there is ambiguity in this principle. However, given Hegel's explicit recognition of the distinction between the religious and secular moments in this life-world, there is no convincing reason to believe that the former moment has been compromised through Hegel's introducing of ambiguity into it.

This brings me to what Professor Westphal argues are the problems generated by the ambiguity in Hegel's definition of the Protestant Principle. The first problem is that Hegel's Principle of Autonomy is an Enlightenment principle, which is "significantly at odds with the self-understanding of Luther," and that the differences between this principle and the Reformation Principle of Subjectivity "are too deep to be papered

over so easily" (p. 80). Now I have argued, in effect, that Hegel has not papered over the differences, and it seems to me that what Professor Westphal refers to as the Principle of Autonomy in Hegel's definition of Protestant subjectivity is either completely out of place here or else can be viewed only as a representation of that objective reason which manifests itself as a consequence of free religious subjectivity which has entered the secular world. Indeed, Professor Westphal appears to be cognizant of the latter alternative when in the second part of his paper he acknowledges that "Hegel saw Protestantism as the affirmation of the public present" (p. 82). More-

over, he suggests that for Hegel the issue of the Reformation is “an ellipse whose two foal are the consecration of the Host by faith alone and the repudiation of the three monastic vows along with the life-world they symbolize” (pp. 82-83). As might be expected, for Hegel it is precisely the rejection of the monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience that opens the door for the worldly involvement of religious subjective consciousness. For example, with the new attitude of respect which is paid to the institution of marriage, “the family introduces man to the communityto the relation of interdependence in society; and this union is a moral one.”

11 To what extent this worldly Protestantism automatically gives rise to the Enlightenment is naturally open to debate, but I see Hegel making only a tight historical connection between the main principles of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, not a full-blown identity.12

The second problem raised by Professor Westphal is that “by failing to distinguish it [the Principle of Subjectivity] clearly from the Principle of Autonomy and by giving such prominence to the latter, Hegel gives short shrift to his own Principle of Subjectivity, both in terms of its content and in terms of its importance” (pp. 80-81). Now Hegel certainly does have much to say that is critical of abstract subjectivity and subjectivism.13 He also recognizes the inadequacy of Protestant subjectivity inasmuch as its content goes no further than immediate feeling. However, we should note that even in the reconciliation of the heart within Lutheran faith the question of objectivity stands in the forefront, specifically with respect to the dependence of subjectivity on both Scripture and Grace. Professor Westphal recognizes that for Hegel this dependence is antithetical to true freedom and also that Hegel surely cannot really intend to resolve the issue of subjectivity and objectivity by letting the latter swallow up the former. I agree, but I also do not think that it is ever Hegel’s intention to identify his own dialecticaly enriched concept of subjectivity with the immediate consciousness of being reconciled to oneself in religious feeling. In any case, the question of subjectivity is never viewed by Hegel as detached from the question of objectivity. Thus, for instance, in Catholicism the

connection between the two is manifested in blind obedience to the Church, in Lutheranism in obedience of the heart to the commands of an external divine authority, and in the ethical life of the state in the free obedience of the rational will to the necessity of the *Begriff*.[14] It is Hegel's view that only in the last of these instances does objectivity cease to be an externality which stands apart from, or dominates, conscious subjectivity. One may find Hegel's concept of subjectivity to be ultimately unsatisfactory, but this in itself does not warrant the charge that in his treatment of it there is a lack of seriousness on Hegel's part.

Finally, the third problem raised by Professor Westphal is that the Principle of Autonomy expresses an absolute freedom, the paradoxes of which Hegel had already noted in his *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Here I can only reply that, regardless of the absolute freedom, which is the standard of the Enlightenment and which Hegel views as part of the progress of World-Spirit, it is clear, even in the overall context of the passage in the *Philosophy of History*

15 from which Professor Westphal quotes, that for Hegel this does not constitute the last word on the issue of autonomy. Several pages later, Hegel remarks that "this principle of thought makes its appearance in the first instance in a general and abstract form… the results of thought are thus posited as finite, and the *éclaircissement* utterly banished and extirpated all that was speculative from things human and divine."16 Even more to the point, Hegel later states, "It has been said, that the *French Revolution* resulted from Philosophy… but this philosophy is in the first instance only abstract thought, not the concrete comprehension of absolute Truthintellectual positions between which there is an immeasurable chasm."17 Given Hegel's own assessment of modernity as dominated by the pursuit of private rights and private enjoyment, as well as moral views and personal opinions and convictions which lack objective truth, it is clear that the concrete comprehension of absolute truth has not yet been realized, but rather, as Professor Westphal quite rightly points out, is *"a task that remains uncompleted"* (p. 85). This is not to say that philosophy cannot harmonize the discords of modern times but only that it must do so, for the time being, solely in contemplative thought.18

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson (London: Kegan, Trench, Treubne & Co., 1896), p. 147 (hereafter cited as *HP*).

2. Ibid., p. 148.

3. Ibid., p. 154.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,* trans. E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), 3: 134f (hereafter cited as *PR*).

5. Ibid., p. 135. Hegel continues:

> The Now or actuality of communion as thus represented is transferred partly to a region beyond, to a heaven beyond the present, partly to the past and partly to the future. Spirit, however, is above all things present, and demands a real and complete presence; it demands more than love merely, than sad ideas or mental pictures, it demands that the content should itself be present, or that the feeling, the sensation experienced should be developed and expanded" (pp. 134-5).

6. Ibid., p. 135.

7. Ibid., pp. 135-6.

8. Ibid., p. 136. Cf. Hegel's *The Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 333, where Hegel states that "man, finite when regarded *for himself,* is yet at the same time the Image of God and a fountain of infinity *in himself.* He is the object of his own existencehas in himself an infinite value, an eternal destiny." (hereafter cited as *PH*).

9. Ibid., p. 139.

10. Cf. ibid., p. 139.

In this state in which Spirit is reconciled with itself, what is inward knows itself as being within the sphere of its own nature, knows that it is together with itself, *and this knowledge that it is together with itself, not outside of itself, is just Thought,* which is the state of reconciliation, the being together with self, the being at peace with self, *but in a wholly abstract undeveloped condition of peace with itself.* (Emphasis added.)

11. *PH,* p. 422. See note 8, above.

12. In all fairness to Professor Westphal it should be noted that, aside from those passages in Hegel which he believes are problematic (especially the one linking Descartes and the Protestant Principle, which he quotes), he does acknowledge that there are places where Hegel recognizes the differences between the Reformation and the Enlightenment (see p. 000 and note 38). However, I would urge that even those passages he considers troublesome can be read in a spirit that links, rather than identifies, the principles of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Moreover, Protestant worldliness is the linking factor.

13. See *HP,* p. 148. Cf. Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction,* trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 39; also Hegel's *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pars. 139-40, remarks and additions.

14. See *PR,* p. 138; *PH,* p. 423; also Hegel's *The Philosophy of Mind,* trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 160.

15. See *PH,* pp. 438-9.

16. *PH,* p. 442. Cf. *PR,* pp. 147-8.

17. Ibid., p. 446.

18. *PR,* p. 151.

Chapter Five
World History and the History of the Absolute Spirit

Walter Jaeschek

I

No other representative of classical philosophy is considered as much a philosopher of history as was Hegel. His thought is considered, not without reason, as evidence that philosophy for the first time in its history had become aware of the problem of history, including its own history and the history of the world. That it has become aware of this problem means not only that it has noticed that an empirical phenomenon, called history, is encountered by the thinking man in his consideration of the world, but it also means that philosophy has to make it its project now, to determine what history actually is and also what it signifies for philosophy that there is such a thing as history. Hegel's philosophy distinguishes itself for apprehending this twofold project and proposing a solution for it. He appears to have attained what seems to have been impossible before him and no longer possible after him, namely, in the context of a philosophical system to apprehend history and by this means to bring about the reconciliation of metaphysics and history.

However, the objection was raised very soon that this reconciliation was not an actual one, but only an illusion, and that in reality it was a mere confusion of two fundamentally different areasmetaphysics

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and history. But when, at least for a moment, one thinks of Hegel as the philosopher of history in the just mentioned sense, the space that world history fills in Hegel's system looks comparatively small. World history is thematized only by a few paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia,* and in the *Philosophy of Right,* world history has only slightly more recognition. Above all, the systematic location of world history in Hegel's system is not above critical objections. The treatment of world history at the end of the philosophy of objective spirit, as the third sphere of the state, may seem only arbitrarily added to the treatment of the inner and outer right of the state. On the one hand, the transition from the *Staatsrecht* to world history clearly transcends the chapter on the state. On the other hand, and as a consequence of this systematic location, world history seems to be thought of primarily as a history of states, as a mere political history. One has to ask whether the concept of history is not illegitimately constricted by this starting point. This suspicion may find further nourishment in the fact that Hegel devotes to world history a special series of lectures, alongside the treatment of the histories of other phenomena, such as art, religion, and philosophy. This series of lectures can be considered as a further development of the more concise paragraphs of the philosphy of history in the *Encyclopedia* or the *Philosophy of Right.*

The treatment of history thus seems to be limited to a specific part of the system. In contrast with it stand the further parts of the system, which seem to have nothing to do with history. In this case it would seem to be an overstatement to point to Hegel as a philosopher of history. Nevertheless the significance of history in Hegel's system is by no means exhausted with the treatment of world history at the conclusion of objective spirit, for history is by no means merely the history of states or political history. In addition to the political sphere, art, religion, and philosophy also have their own history, and the fact that Hegel has also made these histories into a theme is no less significant than his treatment of world history for substantiating his importance as a philosopher of history. With the addition of these more extensive forms of history, besides political history, Hegel's project is constrained to clarify just how these various forms of history are related to one other, and above all, just why such a variety of forms should be found at all. And furthermorewhen we consider that a place for historical

treatment has already been found for the state, for art, for religion and philosophy, and for science in generalwhy not also a place for historical treatment of other objects, for example of self-consciousness, of the moon, or of the concept of universality? The mere encounter of four forms of history could not really be considered a philosophical treatment.

In his *Phenomenology of Spirit*the work in which the problem of

history presented itself to Hegel for the first time in its full systematic impact, immediately after his first lecture on the history of philosophy, Hegel had already attempted to explain why there should not be many, perhaps even infinitely many, forms of history, or better, why only certain objects have a history. Hegel had said in the *Phenomenology* that only the totality of spirit is in time, not the moments of spirit, and we may apply this statement also to the question of logical distinctions and say that logical distinctions also would not be in time. Thus only the forms, and not the moments, of spirit have a history, and there can only be so many histories or so many diverse aspects of history as there are forms of spirit. For example, nature is also in time, but nature is only implicitly spirit, and so, according to Hegel, has no history. The correctness of this assertion seems to me to remain unscathed by the talk about a history of nature; history is essentially history of spirit. Later, in the *Encyclopedia* (par. 548), Hegel speaks a bit more precisely about this matter. There he says that spirit has a form as a particular folkspirit, that is, a form which has for its content a particular social principle and for that reason develops further in time into other particular folkspirits. And so, granted that world history for Hegel is closely tied to the existence of states, nevertheless it is not, in the last analysis, the state in which history is grounded, but rather in the concept of spirit. The only reason why there is a history of states is that the states are forms of spirit in time. And once we understand that the historicity even of world history is grounded in the nature of spirit, it is not hard to understand why Hegel, the philosopher of spirit, is also looked upon as the philosopher of history. Since Hegel's philosophy in general can be understood as a philosophy of spirit, for even logic is implicitly spirit, and nature is spirit that has externalized itself, it is by no means farfetched to point to Hegel's entire system as a philosophy of history. And so, while there are *prima facie* indications that the significance of history for Hegel is extremely limited, since only a very few paragraphs at the end of objective spirit are concerned with it, nevertheless, now the other extreme position, namely, that his system as a whole is a philosophy of history, seems to have more validity.

However, the second extreme position, just like the first, runs up against considerable difficulties in the context of the system, because for one thing, in no way is Hegel's entire philosophy in the strict sense to be accounted a

philosophy of spirit, that is, a philosophy of spirit in its developed form. And for another thing, besides the various forms of spirit, there also appear to be stages which then also need to have a history. And so, even in the literature, several forms of history have become distinguished which cannot merely be ascribed to the selfsame level as that of the histories of art, of religion, and of

philosophy, but which stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other. In view of this, the challenge for the interpreter is precisely to determine whether all these above-named forms can legitimately be looked upon as forms of history, and second, to determine the interrelationship of the various modes of history. And then, finally, we must ask how it comes about and how it is even thinkable that one spirit could have diverse forms of history and nevertheless still remain one.

II

Less problematical is that form of history which even independently from Hegel's philosophy is considered to be history in the proper sense, namely, world history. That there is a world history seemed almost a given; before the rise of analytic philosophy of history one could assume with a clear conscience that the existence of world history could be easily proven. For Hegel, world history is of course not the history of the world in our sense of the word, namely the history of the universe, but only the history of states. Hegel's world history begins with the appearance of the state, and as it proceeds it is always connected with various developments of administrative power. People who do not build a state cannot for that very reason be conveyors of world history and, likewise, cannot be objects of the Hegelian presentation of the word historical process. But though we can talk about a beginning of the word process in Hegel's philosophyit begins with the first establishment of the state, and, for Hegel, that is the Chinese empirestill, he doesn't present any consideration of an end of word history. To ascribe such an end to history would presuppose that mankind had ceased to organize itself in the form that Hegel called *Sittlichkeit,* or ethical life, and especially in the highest ethical form, in the state. But philosophy cannot consider such a situation, since philosophy is only concerned with that which is and not with prophesying, and it can also be presumed that the very thought of such a cessation of history for Hegel would be unthinkable. And the current thoughts of a rupture of world history through the annihilation of mankind would seem to someone in the nineteenth century to be incapable of furnishing a proper object for philosophical reflection.

Since history is a property of the forms of spirit, it does not remain just a history of states or political history. It is likewise the history of absolute

spirit, and that means the history of art, religion, and philosophy, in all of which absolute spirit unfolds itself. And so we have here actually not just one further form, but rather three further forms of history to deal with; but these three forms are to be found on the

same level, so that they can here be treated as a unity. Unfortunately, because Hegel did not go extensively into the relationship of these further forms of history, we cannot carry the question about them any further than he does. The treatment of these three histories in the context of the lectures on esthetics, philosophy of religion, and history of philosophy shows dearly, however, that Hegel considered it possible to present these three types of history separately, although connected by some hints at their relationship.

But with the differentiation between world history and the above-mentioned, threefold partial histories of absolute spirit, it would seem that the possibility of enumerating various levels of history is still in no way exhausted. For, first of all, along with the above-mentioned differentiation, the problem presents itself as to how the histories of these three forms of absolute spirit are interrelated among themselves, that is to say, the problem of the historical and systematic interrelationship of the partial histories of absolute spirit, and also the problem of their relationship to world history. The fact that they do not come one after the other or alongside each other does not require lengthy consideration. But it would be required that we proceed far beyond the sparse hints actually offered by Hegel in developing this problem of the systematic interrelationship, and it would not be out of order for us to assume that all three types of partial history simply present aspects of the one history of absolute spirit. But there is also another possibility of interpretation, namely, that only individual stages of these three partial histories can be assembled in an overarching history, that is, in the history of absolute spirit.

The assumption of such an overarching history of absolute spirit suggests itself in the construction of the final paragraphs of the *Encyclopedia.* For here Hegel treats art, religion, and philosophyand indeed, as can be seen, art primarily as classical Greek, religion almost exclusively as Christian, and philosophy as modern philosophy. If we take this into consideration, then, the sphere of absolute spirit seems to build up an overarching path through the partial histories of art, religion, and philosophy, a path that proceeds from classical art through the Christian religion and up to modem philosophy: this would be a history of absolute spirit, proceeding just like

the partial histories and world history itself in time, in other words, a time-bound history of the absolute spirit.

But such a time-bound history of absolute spirit is still not the final level of history. If history in the final analysis is nothing but the structure of spirit, and if this structure is embedded in the form of dialectical development, that is to say, in the process of self-alienation and self-synthesis of spirit with itself in that which is other than itself, then this structure becomes evident even earlier and in an even more

fundamental position in the system, namely, in the doctrine proper to Christianity concerning the immanent life of the triune God. For here already, before the creation of the world, before the externalization of spirit into the world, Hegel finds this essential process, which has been characterized as the root of history. And since this eternal history of spirit without doubt has not only conceptual but temporal priority to the forms of history already mentioned, it appears consequently that one could speak of these other forms of the process of spirit, which are also traditionally characterized as historical, only under the rubric of historical when they are grounded in the original form of history which we have now uncovered. Thus the history of the world, and also the partial histories of absolute spirit and the time-bound history of absolute spirit, could be grounded in this eternal history of spirit, and would be embedded in this latter for their meaning. For without this eternal history, there would be no such thing as history at all. Thus, it could be argued that the other forms of history are history only insofar as the process of spirit, the process of alienation and return in itself, happens within them.

III

The quadruplicity of these levels of historyworld history, partial histories, temporal history of the absolute spirit, and external history of the absolute spiritis derived less from Hegel's work than from the current discussion about it. Hence, the next thing for us to do is to discuss the adequacy of these distinctions to Hegel's own position. We need go no further into the demonstration that the levels of world history and of the three partial histories of art, religion, and philosophy were recognized by Hegel. Questions remain only with regard to the temporal and eternal history of the absolute spirit.

The expressions 'eternal history' and 'eternal divine history' are found in Hegel's philosophy of religion and especially in his presentation of Christianity. These expressions, however, do not signify, as is generally supposed in the literature, the divine innertrinitarian life. By 'divine history' Hegel understands the process of eternal being-within-self, externalization in appearance, and, finally, return out of appearance, or, in theological terms, the process of the outer, the economical trinity, or, in the terms Hegel

used to characterize religious presentation, the succession of the Kingdoms of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Thus the immanent trinity would not properly be the eternal history, but only the eternal point of departure for the divine history. The case is similar, in the second place, where Hegel speaks about the ‘eternal divine history’. For by this is meant the appearance of God in finite spirit in general, the history of salvation

and reconciliation. On the other hand, the concept of history is not extended to a characterization of the first sphere, the so-called immanent trinity. This sphere is merely said to be the sphere of the concept of God, of thought within itself, of God in his eternity, namely the absolute idea in and for itself. In what follows thereupon, Hegel explicitly says that divine history in the proper sense is the second element, and so it is the kingdom of the son. The sphere of immanent trinity however, is more precisely characterized as the sphere of eternal presence. In contrast to this stands the sphere of temporality which divides itself up into past, present, and future. Thus, the talk about eternal history cannot, without problems, be employed with reference to the sphere of the immanent trinity, even if one tried to base the argument on the philosophy of religion. If this were possible, then we would have an explicit theological grounding for world history, or, more precisely, the innertrinitarian life of God would then supply the grounding for world history. But this interpretation is not defended by Hegel.

Nevertheless it makes good sense to retain this connection of the first sphere, the so-called kingdom of the Father, with history. For even though with Hegel, references to the 'eternal history' are to the totality of the eternal presence and temporality, still even in view of this eternal present, the thought of a dynamic process is to be retained. For this sphere of the eternal present is not, strictly speaking, to be thought of as something static, which would involve the employment of the category of temporality. Hegel conceives this eternal present as a process, and indeed as the process of being-within-self, of diremption and return to self, as differentiation and reference to self in one's other. This dynamic eternal activity, as one must project it in order to exclude the thought of a historical process, is however nothing else than the dialectical process of the science of logic. This latter is indeed fundamental for the ulterior parts of the system for the logic grounds all further processes, since it formulates nothing except the essence of spirit itself. In philosophical terms, the sphere that is referred to by religious representation as the kingdom of the Father is nothing other than the process of pure thought in the logic, that is, the process of the absolute idea, which Hegel possibly gave the most precise definition of in paragraph 237 of the *Encyclopedia.* In this respect, then, the eternal history understood in the sense we have just mentioned must indeed be conceived as the ground

of world history. For world history is certainly grounded in the concept of spirit. But this concept is nothing but the absolute idea of the logic. Thus the grounding for the historicity of history is not so much a theological as a logical grounding, or, more precisely, this grounding is not produced by recourse to the Christian doctrine but comes from the science

of pure thinking. But insofar as logic is speculative theology, so also is the grounding of history an ontotheological one. Thus the historicity of history is conditioned by the concept of spirit, and this concept is developed in the science of logic, in the absolute idea. As a consequence, the connection that is claimed to exist between eternal history and world history remains stable; but this connection is to be thought of less as something uplifting than as a philosophically sober concept in the sense of the logic. In this way the meaning for the expression ‘eternal history’if one intends to employ this expression at all is definitely at hand. Temporality is for Hegel excluded from the development of the various logical determinations. The concepts of the logic are not forms of spirit that fall into the framework of time. And so, for this reason, the process of logic is not history in the full sense of the word. Nevertheless Hegel holds fast in maintaining that the connection of logical determinations among themselves can be spoken of as a process, as the self-movement of the concept. We cannot in this paper go any further into the question concerning the more precise character of such a movement, of the solution of the paradox as to just how a process can ever develop outside of space and time. For we are concerned here only with putting the connection between world history and this latter fundamental sphere into a less solemn light than is usually the case. What is involved in this connection can be stated very concisely: the only reason why there is world history is, that the essence of spirit is dialectical and is the process of alienation and return to self. And this structure of the dialectic is nowhere else cognized in its concept than in the science of logic.

It is not at all a matter here of rejecting some concept of an eternal history. But it must be taken into account that this expression should be taken as meaning nothing more than what Hegel himselfmore correctlycalled the ‘eternal present’. When it is comprehended in this way, it is less mysterious and more philosophically revealing, at least to the degree that Hegel’s logic can be taken as a treatment of basic ontological concepts that can clearly be comprehended. Whoever bases the character of Hegel’s philosophy as a philosophy of history on the fact that it thinks of the innertrinitarian divine life as a history, on the one hand, overextends the concept of history so far that it becomes worthless, and on the other hand, destroys the foundational relationship of the logic to world history. For the light whichin the context

of a theologizing interpretationfalls from eternal history upon world history, consists in nothing else than the fact that the dialectic of pure thought determinations supplies the foundation for all further developments of the system, not only for the development of history. Nevertheless we could say that in history this dialectic and in general the concept of spirit is more clearly com-

prehensible than in nature, although Hegel also postulates that logic grounds nature as well.

According to this redetermination of the concept of an ‘eternal history’, now, before I return to world history, I should mention briefly the concept of a ‘temporal history of absolute spirit’. The undertaking of this sort of history seems less problematic than the undertaking of the ‘eternal history’. For even though this third sort of history would be the history of absolute spirit, it would still be a history in which time is a factor, and which at the very least would have to have a given beginning and an end that can be determined. If one presupposes the legitimacy of the undertaking of such a history, the beginning of this history, for Hegel, is Greek art, and its end coincides with the end of modern philosophy, although there is some question as to where precisely this end should be located. And so the problem of the temporal history of absolute spirit lies not in any self-contradiction in the concept of history, but rather in the doubt whether there are extensive enough grounds in Hegel for attributing such a history over and above the partial histories of absolute spirit.

We have already remarked above that the supposition of a temporal history of absolute spirit would depend on the interpretation that in the last section of the *Encyclopedia.* This would leave room for the suspicion that not only a systematic but also a historical succession is in question, or, in other words, that from the highest form of art, the art of classical Greece, through the final form of the history of religion, that is, the Christian religion, and right up to the final form of philosophy, that is, modem philosophy, a very special historical process takes place, which is distinguishable from those three partial histories of absolute spirit already discussed. In this case, then, not the partial histories but rather the above-mentioned sections from these partial histories would be characterized as belonging to absolute history, and only these sections would constitute the history of absolute spirit. In this case, there would be in certain specifically identifiable places in the partial histories and in world history an elevation out of these partial histories to the status of absolute history, with the result that world history, in contrast, would remain, having been divested of its absolute content, on the level of empirical process once more.

The supposition of such a special type of history of the absolute spirit cannot be defended, however. No justification can be found in the explicit statements of Hegel; the supposition is based merely on the above-named and completely arbitrary interpretation of the last section of the *Encyclopedia.* This supposition however, should be eliminated at the start, because, even in his notes on the *Encyclopedia,* Hegel by no means restricts philosophy to modem philosophy. The

great mass of Hegel's hand-written notes treat ancient philosophy, and a similar relationship is also found in his lectures on the history of philosophy. Likewise, in the section on religion, he goes beyond the Christian religion to the prechristian religions, if only for a brief treatment. Altogether there is no basis for the supposition of a special 'temporal history of the absolute spirit'. And even aside from the fact that this supposition of a special temporal history of absolute spirit has no support in Hegel's own declarations, there are also positive grounds that completely rule out the possibility of such a supposition. There would be a justification for this if the three forms of absolute spirit depicted a specific and exclusive interrelationship. But classical art is included in the history of art, and, similarly, the Christian religion in the history of religion, and modern philosophy in the history of philosophy; thus even the Christian religion finds its proper historical presuppositions in the religions that precede it, just as, in a somehow more discrete fashion, modern philosophy has its presuppositions in ancient philosophy. This in no way excludes the possibility that classical art could also be counted as one of the presuppositions of the Christian religion. But still, such a relationship would not be an exclusive one, resulting in the abrogation of the immanent context of the history of religion. The supposition of a specific historical continuity between classical art and the Christian religion and modem philosophy would merely disturb and devalue the actual continuity existing within the partial histories of absolute spirit, and in this way would actually rob world history of its absolute content. Finally, the supposition of a temporal history of absolute spirit has one further latent consequence: art, religion, and philosophy together depict the forms of absolute spirit. All three also have a history. Nevertheless, the so-called absolute history would have to be so construed that it would exclude the largest parts of the history of absolute spirit from itself. Therefore we conclude that there is indeed a history of absolute spirit. But this latter develops itself in the partial histories. The so-called absolute history is nothing other than that which according to its diverse aspects falls into the partial histories of art, religion, and philosophy. And thus, there can be no such thing as a special history of absolute spirit, since absolute spirit is not a separate, temporal configuration of spirit that is to be distinguished from its forms in art, religion, and philosophy. And just as previously the supposition of the eternal history

was not entirely rejected, so also here the supposition of a temporal history of absolute spirit is not to be completely rejected. But it must be grasped in a different way, because it develops itself in the context of the three partial histories, and not otherwise.

IV

If this supposition seems persuasive, even so there is something dissatisfying about it. For how can it be that spirit, the one spirit, has several histories? And in particular several histories, over against which world history stands?

Such a solution would be at any rate not completely credible. If for this reason the supposition of an eternal and a temporal history of absolute spirit is rejected, and if these two are no longer to be opposed to world history and the partial histories, and are not to claim absolute content, then the absolute content would no longer fall beyond world history. Therefore the relationship of the history of the absolute content to world history must be grasped in a new way. While the absolute content was previously thought to fall into the two forms of history that have been rejected, now we should consider the newer supposition that this content falls in the partial histories as distinct from world history. For it is not immediately evident that the absolute content should develop itself directly in world history as a history of states, outside of which the forms of absolute spirit would first come into existence.

This objection is, however, to be considered as substantial only so long as the three partial histories of absolute and world history are to be thought of as external to each other. But this contradicts the meaning Hegel gives to world history. Hegel conceives world history in no way as purely a history of states, as merely political history. World history is, as he often emphasizes, a history of the totality of spiritual attainments. It seems therefore that it could be claimed that two different forms of world history are to be distinguished: on the one side the history of the world as the history of the totality of spirit, and on the other side a history of the world in the strict sense as a political history, which stands over against the partial histories of absolute spirit. But then it is immediately apparent that even with this distinction it cannot be a question of two different types of history. For insofar as world history in the wider sense is determined as the history of the spiritual totality, world history in the narrower sense can still depict a momentthe external empirical side. History of the totality is world history

only insofar as it comprehends within itself the history of the forms of absolute spirit alongside political history.

But if this is the only sense in which world history in the narrower sense, as the history of the rise and fall of states, stands in contrast to history in the sense of a totality, a new systematic problem appears. Although it seems evident that world history in the narrower sense falls into the sphere of objective spirit, it seems that world history in

the broader sense could find its location in Hegel's system only after the treatment of the partial histories of absolute spirit, for Hegel did not deal with art, religion, and philosophy at the end of the sphere of objective spirit. But if the objection is made that world history in the sense of totality is too rich, so to speak, in order to be dealt with at the end of the sphere of objective spirit, likewise it must be objected that history in the merely political sense is too poor to have its systematic location at this place in the system, because the highest concept of objective spirit is the concept of ethical life. History as the mere process of states comprises only the external side of this concept of ethical life. But the concept of world history as the history of the spiritual totality is fully adequate to the concept of ethical life, for the ethical life of a nation is the actual totality of its spiritual manifestations. For this reason world history, as the history that bears the absolute content, already has its systematic location at the end of the sphere of objective spirit. For these forms of absolute spirit, its concrete historical figures are not opposed to ethical life as something alien. As far as the actuality of art, religion, and philosophy is concerned, they find their place in objective spirit, in the ethical life of the nation. Thus, world history has its absolute content not in some other histories outside itself. It has the content within itself, and this definition is justified, if world history is comprehended as the history of the totality of ethical life. The impression that world history is something alien standing in contrast to the partial histories, or that these partial histories are separate from world history, arises only if one does not adequately comprehend the concept of ethical life. For the state is not something existing for itself, something that religion had to invade from on high, from a world beyond, but religion as well as the further forms of absolute spirit are nothing but the reflection of the ethical substance in itself, and that means that they are the core of the ethical substance, the forms in which ethical spirit knows itselfthe self-consciousness of ethical life.

Thus, contrary to our suspicion at the beginning, there are not four types of history, building from the lowest level, world history, a hierarchy leading to the eternal history of an absolute spirit beyond the world. What is true is that the one spirit has only one history, world history. This is the history of the different manifestations of the totality of ethical spirit, and in this

totality are implied the three different forms of reflection of ethical spirit in itself, that is to say, art, religion, and philosophy, which stand in close connection among themselves, a connection that is established and grounded by world history. Therefore, in the *Encyclopedia* Hegel can state that the history of religion and world history fall together in one process. The same is no less true for the history of art and philosophy.

But with this solution, not all of the systematic problems are put aside. The question remains concerning the relationship of the above-mentioned moments of the one world history, and in particular concerning the relationship between the partial histories and world history as a totality. The first question cannot be discussed here extensively, because the answers would lead away from our subject. Thus the second question remains, and, in view of this, one must keep in mind the consequences of the integration of the partial histories of absolute spirit into world history. Thus, one could assume that the specific form of the partial histories determines world history, too, in particular with regard to the assumption of an end of history.

But Hegel, in his concept of history, already takes into account the possible consequences of these partial histories by determining that history as totality has an absolute ultimate goal: the realization of freedom. In this context, freedom is not primarily conceived politically but ontologically, as the final realization of relationships in reality which are determined by the concept, so that spirit can find itself in these relationships and can find itself in its alienation. This definition of the ultimate goal already implies that the concept of world history comprises the partial histories of the absolute spirit. It goes far beyond the sphere of politics, or more specifically, it transcends the restricted meaning of political life, which is characteristic of the present use of the word. If one intends to use the word ”political” in this context, it must be understood in its classical sense, in the sense of the life of the ancient polis. And thus the intimate way becomes apparent, in which art, religion, and philosophy are integrated into this political life in the ancient sense of the word.

But, on the other hand, despite their unity, the histories of art, religion, and philosophy are to be distinguished insofar as they have a different movement. History of art, as divided into three parts, has almost the same starting point as world history, and it has its culmination in its second period, in classical art, and finds its substantial end in Christianity. The history of religion is analogous to the history of art insofar as it starts with the foundation of states, too, although in its first rudimentary forms, it belongs to the period prior to the foundation of states. Hegel, however, does not discuss this earliest period extensively. History of religion culminates in

Christianity, and in Christianity it has its substantial end. Of course the possibility is not excluded that new religions will emerge, but these further religions will not bring about something substantially new, because in Christianity the concept of religion is objectified, and it cannot transcend itself. Therefore Christianity is called the absolute religion. The third form, history of philosophy, is divided into ancient and modern philosophy, and one must put forward the question whether the end

of this third partial history has to be identical with the end of world history, or at least with the realization of the ultimate goal of world history. For what absolute content can remain for world history if this content is exhausted in the forms of absolute spirit? The end of the history of philosophy, however, marks a substantial period in the history of the world. That, for Hegel, history of philosophy had reached its goal in his own philosophy, can be comparatively easily demonstrated, in spite of all disclaimers by Hegel himself or by well-meaning interpreters of his philosophy. If the concept of history of philosophy is defined as the self-consciousness of spirit, the goal of history is necessarily achieved when this concept of spirit has come to be an adequate object of philosophical knowledgeand for Hegel this doubtless took place in his philosophy. This is the reason why he is in a position to look backward on the labor that spirit had to complete within several thousand years: *tantae molis erat se ipsam cog-noscere mentem.* This sentence presupposes the completion of what it speaks about. The only thing left for a further history of philosophy would be a new type of this history. But in this case, the unity of the history of philosophy would be broken. If the meaning of history is defined as the realization of a specific goal, this history necessarily comes to an end when this goal is achievedunless one determines this goal in such a way that it is unfulfillable, and thus history leads into an infinite progress. But nothing is more alien to Hegel than this. That history finds its end in time is the inescapable consequence of a constitution of the meaning of history by the determination of a goal. For then the conditions are distinctly stated by the realization of which the end of history is accomplished.

The end of history, however, is not necessarily identical with the end of the history of philosophyeven in the case that the end of the history of philosophy may have structural similarities to the end of world history. For while history of art is terminated by religion, and history of religion by modem philosophy, history of philosophy is not terminated from without by a further form of absolute spirit. History of philosophy has its end within itself, that is, in the accomplishment of its goal, of its concept. But this concept is different from the goal of world history. If this goal also were the cognition of the concept of spirit, its end would be identical with the end of the history of philosophy. What would remain after this end would be a

mere movement without a goal and a meaninga mechanical movement that would be as meaningless as impossible to stop. If the goal of the world history lies not in the cognition of the concept but in the realization of freedom, the period of world history that starts with the end of history of philosophy has a specific content of its own. For true realization of freedom is totally excluded as long as the principle

of freedom has not come to be the proper object of philosophical cognition, as is the case in modem philosophy. This does not mean that there were no previous attempts to realize freedom. But all these had to remain insufficient, as long as the principle of freedom had not been grasped clearly by philosophy. This is the point where the previous relationship between philosophy and actuality is reversedthe relation that philosophical thinking always comes after reality is already complete. Thus world history changes its character after the end of the history of philosophy. Now its content is not the cognition of the principle of freedom, but its realization. This was correctly seen by Hegel's disciples, and the more modem, considerably more sophisticated interpretations of Hegel's philosophy are not in the position to deny these consequences. It is not the subject here to define the proper form of this realization. That it cannot be conceived of as a mere praxis, alien to philosophical theory, does not need to be underlined here. But it remains true that the relation between philosophical cognition and realization must be defined in a new way different from its previous formulations.

My subject here was only, in contrast to some present interpretations, to regain for world history the absolute content, of which it is deprived by the superstructure of several histories of the absolute spirit, with one of these histories being more absolute than the other. These interpretations are not just inadequate to the text. For even if they were adequate, one would have to criticize them sharply, because they apparently bear the characteristics of the projectionist hypothesis: the creation of superworlds, from which, however, a glance, but of course only a very weak glance, falls back to this world and its history. To protest against such a deprivation of world history means to underline the mediation of metaphysics and history, which is a specific characteristic of Hegel's system in general. Such a mediation would not be achieved if the absolute content were present only in the separate histories of absolute spirit, and the eternal were not embedded in actual history, too, and this actual history were not elevated to the absolute.

Comment, by Patricia Altenbernd Johnson

Herr Jaeschke presents an intriguing account of the interweaving of the various levels of history as these become manifest in a unifed presentation of world history. His argument that the history of Absolute Spirit cannot be taken as separate from, or in opposition to, world history is most convincing. In showing the unity of Hegel's philosophy as philosophy of history, he also presents us most force-fully with the challenge that remains to us as philosophers in an era which is uniquely aware of our own capability to bring an end to world historyan end that could more easily be the annihilation rather than the realization of freedom. In the face of this challenge, Herr Jaeschke presents us, by means of his interpretation of Hegel, with the claim that philosophical thinking, particularly about history, is central to the possibility of the realization of freedom. The labor of thought is not completed with the emergence of the concept of freedom, even if this is an end. Moreover, the labor that remains for thought cannot detach itself from political history, the moral life of living peoples. In commenting on Herr Jaeschke's paper, I would like to offer one cautionary comment: in recognizing the unity of Absolute Spirit in world history, we must be careful not to reduce the infinity of the absolute to the finite political. I will then offer some reflections on Hegelian texts which bear on and, I believe, contribute to this reading of Hegel.

A Caution Concerning the Infinity of Absolute Spirit

Herr Jaeschke's account of the four levels of history suggests that eternal history of Absolute Spirit is at once the highest and the in-

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nermost level of history. What he correctly points out is that an eternal history of Absolute Spirit is not a separate history that falls into another world. It is not the history of a divine world which has a distinct temporal and spatial framework, separate from the world of historical experience. "Eternal history," if we are to retain this expression, must be understood as the absolute content of world history. There is world history because the essence of spirit is dialectical, an outering of and returning to self. This inner content has no objective existence, certainly no history, apart from world history.

While I basically agree with this reading of Hegel, I think that there is a need, in making this move, to take care to preserve the absolute in its infinity. This does not mean to attribute to the absolute a way of being that is totally separate from the finite. For Hegel, this would be a spurious infinite. Hegel's articulation of infinity suggests that the infinite needs the finite, but the finite also, and perhaps more urgently, needs the infinite. The infinity of the absolute in-cludes the finite. (The hyphen here is helpful in that it draws our attention to the embracing and encompassing nature of the absolute.) But for Hegel, the infinite cannot be reduced to the finite. The infinity of the absolute would seem to exclude its reduction to political communities. In making the move that Herr Jaeschke makes, we must be careful not to make the infinity of the absolute a spurious infinite. I do not suggest that this has been done in his paper, but I do believe that the danger is great that this will happen as we work out the implications of his move, which tends to focus our attention on humans as organized political communities. I suggest this caution, not only to keep us true to Hegel, but also to help us further pursue the way which Herr Jaeschke's interpretation seems to open for us as philosophers.

World History as Community of Finite and Infinite

Herr Jaeschke's interpretation shows us clearly that world history is the working out of community, not just of political communities, but also of spiritual community, the community of the finite and the infinite. This reading is quite in keeping with Hegel and can find support in several places, particularly at the end of the *Philosophy of Right.* Here Hegel tells us that the realm of spirit lowers itself from heaven to a "common

worldliness of fact and idea" (par. 360). The mundane realm, on the other hand, builds itself up and discards its "barbarity and… caprice." What takes place is a true reconciliation, one that has become objective in the state. It is, however, the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* that remind us most fully of the spiritual nature of this community:

> The fact of the fellowship of God and Man with each other involves a fellowship of Spirit with Spirit. It involves the most important questions. It is a fellowship, and this very circumstance involves the difficulty of at once maintaining the fact of difference and of defining it in such a way as to preserve the fact of fellowship. That Man knows God implies, in accordance with the essential idea of communion or fellowship, that there is a community of knowledge; that is to say Man knows God only in so far as God Himself knows Himself in Man. This knowledge is God's self-consciousness, but it is at the same time a knowledge of God on the part of Man, and this knowledge of God by Man is a knowledge of Man by God.
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> [1]

With this spiritual reconciliation in mind, it might seem that my preliminary caution merely serves to inhibit reconciliation; it may serve more to keep the infinite apart than to bring it into community with the finite, a community that has as its result or manifestation the moral life of a people.

Yet, if we go to the *Science of Logic* and seek to understand the logical movement that, while not historical, makes possible the movement of reconciliation in history, we see more clearly the need for a continued focus on the infinity of the absolute.

In the second chapter of the *Science of Logic,* and thus in the very beginnings of Hegel's working out of the system, concern is directed toward the category of finitude in its relation to the infinite. In that initial presentation, Hegel suggests that "finitude is the most stubborn category of the understanding."[2] He elaborates:

> Negation in general, constitution and limit, reconcile themselves with their other, with determinate being; and even nothing, taken abstractly as such, is given up as an abstraction; but finitude is the negation as *fixed in itself,* and it therefore stands in abrupt contrast to its affirmative. The finite, it is true, lets itself be brought into flux, it is itself this, to be determined or destined to its end, but *only* to its endor rather, it is the refusal to let itself be brought affirmatively to its affirmation, to the infinite, to let itself be united with it; it is therefore posited as inseparable from its nothing, and is thereby cut off from all reconciliation with its other, the affirmative.[3]

One might well suggest that the rest of the *Science of Logic,* and certainly the treatment of history, is devoted to contending with the tenaciousness of finitude in its many appearances. The guiding issue of Hegel's project is to provide the understanding with a way that can show and facilitate the

movement from tenacious finitude to the speculative unity of the finite and the infinite.

I agree with Herr Jaeschke that it is in world history that this reconciliation takes place. It is a reconciliation in which the finite has the double meaning of being itself and yet being the infinite that it opposes. The finite is recognized as in community with the infinite. In world history, the state is the moral life of the peopleart, religion, and philosophy. Yet, in the reconciliation which we recognize in world history, we are not to forget the tenaciousness of finitude which is recognized in the *Logic.* The finite tends to withdraw into itself making the infinite other and spurious. When this happens, the infinite remains beyond and not really present to the finite.

4 The infinite is present in this community only in the mode of absence, if at all. When the tenaciousness of finitude is stressed, the need to be attentive to the presence of the infinite in its difference within world history is recognized, perhaps more forcefully than in Herr Jaeschke's interpretation.

The Task of Philosophy

These reflections on the tenacious finitude do not serve to discredit Herr Jaeschke's interpretation. Certainly it is only in world history that there can be a reconciliation of all of the levels of history, which is appropriate to consider in relation to Absolute Spirit. What these reflections do suggest is the need to stress the importance of the task of the philosopher in history. If we can read history with Hegel and see a certain end as having been attained, still this end must also be understood as having taken us full circle to a beginning. It is perhaps the beginning of a new sort of philosophical activity or mode of thought, one which is neither purely theoretical nor purely practical.

In the *Philosophy of History,* Hegel does give some indication as to what this task consists of. It is the tendency of the finite to withdraw into itself, to see the presence of the infinite as the mere "cunning of reason" and to find no satisfaction in an identity that stands in need of the infinite. There is the need for the finite to reconcile itself with the infinite in order to acknowledge the real goal of finite activity. The task of the philosophy of history is to present in explicit terms what religion knows implicitly, "Freedom can exist only where Individuality is recognized as having its

positive and real existence in the Divine Being."[5] The philosophy of history would seem to be aimed at convincing the finite that it is not simply a means in the process of the self-perfection of the infinite, but that in sharing in this community, it too benefits. The finite shares in objective freedom and can concern "itself only with the glory of the Idea mirroring itself in the History of the World."[6] We might suggest that the task of philosophy is now to face the tenaciousness of finitude which prefers a unity

without opposition, even at the risk of losing all real possibility of unity. If we are at the end of the history of philosophy, we are certainly not at the end of thought. This claim is consistent with the important passage in the *Encyclopedia* which Herr Jaeschke points to (secs. 236-7). To have arrived at the end is to recognize that the interest lies in the whole movement. Hegel suggests in the next section (238) that philosophical thought at this point proceeds both analytically and synthetically. It is passive, an onlooker. Perhaps here Heidegger's language is more helpful. It is listening, dwelling. But it is also synthetic, it "evinces itself to be the action of the notion." The task remains to bring to realization a unity that recognizes and preserves difference. This cannot be done if the history of Absolute Spirit is read as separate from world history. But when the unity of history as world history is recognized, the difficulty of the task of reading this history as the reconciliation of the finite and the infinite becomes even more overwhelming. For carrying out this task we might do well to heed Hegel's warning, "To that end, however, there is required an effort to keep back the incessant impertinence of our own fancies and private opinions." We must take care not to be treating the infinite as spurious or perhaps we must fully face that this is what we are doing.

Notes

1. Trans. E. B. Speirs and J. B. Sanderson (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 3: 303-304.

2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logic* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1975), 1: 117, (hereafter cited as *WL)/Science of Logic,* trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), p. 129 (hereafter cited as *SL*).

3. *WL,* 1: 117; *SL,* pp. 129-30.

4. *WL,* 1: 138; *SL,* p. 149.

5. *Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 50.

6. Ibid., p. 457.

Chapter Six
The Theory and Practice of the History of Freedom: On the Right of History in Hegel's Philosophy of Right

Richard Dien Winfield

The Implausibility of a Philosophy of History

Hegel's philosophy of history has long been dismissed as a genial retelling of the recorded past that must be condemned for imposing an *a priori* conception of historical development upon the intractable givenness of historical fact. Although subsequent thinkers have offered their own schemes of history, Hegel's theory has won notorious fame as the most paradoxical of all. According to common view, Hegel not only constructs history from concepts in unparalleled detail, but conceives past history as a history of freedom while subjecting the course of events to a preconceived necessity lying outside the conscious determination of the agents of history.

If the latter suggests a suspect contradiction in the particular content of Hegel's conception, his general project of a philosophy of history has been perceived to be fatally flawed in light of the corollary on-tological and epistemological grounds that seemingly exclude any *a priori* theory of history whatsoever.

To the degree that history is made by individuals with wills allowing

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for a novelty unbeholden to the cycles of natural necessity, the aggregate result of what they all choose to do over time would appear to entail an arbitrariness as devoid of necessary universal order as it is opaque to conceptual thought. If indeed history results from the combined actions of individuals who enact and tear down institutions according to how they choose to relate to one another, then what is historical involves utterly conventional activities that individuals pursue in their plurality, rather than natural functions, whose unwilled alterations, such as aging, may have a universal order, but no historical character. Accordingly, not only can no individual action in history be preordained, but no historical "meaning" can be deduced from it, since its historical significance will depend upon how all others decide to act in conjunction with it. Because their concomitant actions proceed on the same terms, historical reality seems to present a continuum of an endemically all-sided arbitrariness. This situation of overdetermined willfulness would appear to leave historical action in an insoluble ethical predicament. Whereas each individual has an ethical responsibility before history, by having the possibility of precipitating historical change through acts influencing what others do, the historical effect of each deed is ultimately determined by the actions others choose. If this leaves assignment of responsibility problematic, it also means that any pattern to the succession of events and enacted institutions is simply a matter of circumstance that can only be perceived after the fact. No matter what conditions prevail, the very structure of historical action seemingly precludes there being any final guarantee that individuals will not act so as to overthrow existing regimes, enact novel formations, re-establish previous forms, or perpetuate the status quo.

Even the very continuation of history would appear to be subject to chance. For if history can only be made by a plurality of willing individuals, and if the natural preconditions of their existence can be eliminated, either as a result of their own chosen actions or of natural events, then the continuity of history is itself a matter of contingency. That the sun will burn out, that galaxies may collide, and that we possess the ability to bring about nuclear or ecological holocaust would seem to indicate that history not only has no necessary past, but no necessary future at all.

If this arbitrariness infesting the structural reality of history precludes any sure conformity between what happens in history and a *priori* schemes of historical development, the way in which historical reality is given to our knowing seems to preclude any philosophical knowledge of it as well.

Since the facts of history lie at hand in the form of observable ruins,

received documents, and the testimony of the dead and the living, knowledge of what has happened is caught in all the dilemmas of an interpretive knowing that has no criteria for judging the truth of its object other than ones it stipulates for itself. As in a court of law, where, as Hegel himself points out, the facts of the case can only be known beyond a reasonable doubt,

[1] so in face of the givenness of history, all certainty of historical knowledge has nothing more to rest upon than faith in the honesty and accuracy of available testimony, faith in the prudence of interpretations of given records, and faith in the representative character of the chosen data to which historical understanding applies itself. Because all these operations of subjective judgment first render recorded history an object of investigation, no theory concerning historical fact could provide universal truths, but only subjective constructs, concluded from subjective assumptions determining what is putatively given.

Thus, the philosophy of history undertaken by Hegel would appear to be outruled as much by the conditions for knowing history as by the character of historical reality itself.

There is, however, a central feature of Hegel's discussion of history that raises questions as to whether the above objections to an *a priori* theory of historical fact have any application to the philosophy of history Hegel has pursued. This feature is the striking circumstance that Hegel treats history as a theme of the philosophy of right, conceiving it as the third and final section of the determination of the state, which brings his development of right to a close. What this placement suggests is that Hegel somehow sees fit to include history as a topic of the theory of justice, such as to develop a conception of history that is not an *a priori* scheme of what has occurred or will occur, but part of a normative theory of what ought to occur.

At first sight, this novel inclusion of history within the theory of justice appears particularly strange, since Hegel equally maintains that the relations of right must be determined in their concept and cannot derive their content from what happens to be given in history. As he points out time and again,

the mere historical existence of institutions only testifies to their being and not to their legitimacy.[2] How then can history, so burdened with facticity, have any place in the normative theory of what right ought to be?

Although few discussions of Hegel's philosophy of history have asked this question, only when it is answered can the genuine significance of Hegel's theory of history be appreciated. By addressing how and why history enters as a legitimate theme of the philosophy of right, one not only sees that a conceptual theory of history is possible, but what its subject matter must be.

Justice and the Problem of Foundations

Paradoxically, what compels Hegel to secure a place for history within the orbit of right is the unprecedented radicalness with which he bars historical givenness from playing any role in determining the content of justice.

Unlike so many of his followers, Hegel realizes that no historical age can directly serve as a criterion for judging relations of right. All those, for instance, who immediately take modernity as a standard, and speak synonymously of what is ”progressive” and just, fail to recognize that modern reality has no normativeness on the basis of its contemporaneity, but only insofar as its institutional order is intrinsically just. Since modem relations are not given facts of nature, governed by laws independent of our wills, but historically enacted structures open to question and change, if they do not accord with concepts of right, a revolution may be called for not in the science of justice, but in existing institutions.

What makes Hegel’s rejection of all historical justification so radical is that it is tied to the recognition that no given content of any sort can mandate what ought to be either in theory or in practice.

Although theorists of justice have traditionally alternated between grounding justice in nature or convention, Hegel considers both options equally untenable on precisely this point.

Because justice involves what may legitimately occur through the voluntary actions of individuals, it cannot consist in what happens according to nature independently of their wills. Although natural relations provide necessary preconditions for individuals to exist and be able to engage in willing, the very fact that natural relations are given, rather than willed into being, means that they cannot prescribe what is just, but only comprise a normatively neutral domain presupposed by all action, whether right or wrong.

Although justice is thus not given by nature independently of willing, it cannot be determined by given convention as a set of operative rules of behavior. Convention can no more be a source of normativeness, Hegel realizes, because compliance with given rules only means that behavior is

rule-governed and not that it has legitimacy deserving respect. Admittedly, since justice is not a relation of nature but something willed into being, it does exist only by convention. Nevertheless, for relations between individuals to have the normativeness distinguishing them from ordered behavior, they must neither be relative to nor legitimated by the particular conditions of their enactment. This must be so because what is just ought to hold regardless of any particular circumstances which do not already involve relations of justice commanding the same respect. If relations of justice

were relative to some factor that was not just itself, they would be conditioned by something unjust, and immediately forfeit their normative character as what ought to be.

For this reason, justice has an unconditioned universality indissolubly linked to an independence from givenness, be it natural or conventional. What is just is universally valid in that it is justified under any circumstances that do not themselves comprise relations of justice. Only when the particular features of a given state of affairs already enjoy the normativeness of justice are they worthy of entering into determining what practice ought to be followed. Consequently, the universality of justice is unconditioned, insofar as relations of justice can only be legitimately limited by what falls within justice itself.

This means that no factor given independently of just willing can mandate the content of justice. To have normativeness, justice simply cannot have its measure or ground in something other than itself. Justice must rather be its own ground and somehow legitimate itself without reference to any outside standard.

Although this insight is already implicit in Plato's and Aristotle's notion that justice exists for its own sake and no other, Hegel brings it to its full consequences.

To begin with, he recognizes that for justice to be its own ground, it must have no foundations. The basic problem with both natural right and conventionalist theories of justice is precisely that they give justice foundations, either by grounding it in natural law, deriving it from some procedure of construction (as in the case of Rawls), or appealing to convention. In so doing, they commit the fallacy of determining justice by something other than itself, thereby making it relative to something outside of justice, and cancelling its putative legitimacy.

Hegel, on the contrary, is aware that the problem of foundationalism must be overcome, and overcome not only with regard to justice, but with regard to truth itself. In both theory and practice, justification can be secured only when all unlegitimated givens are deprived of any determining role. In Hegel's view, the problem with metaphysical and transcendental

philosophies is that they develop their conceptions with unargued assumptions concerning reality and the conditions of knowing, even as natural right and conventionalist theories of justice determine it on the basis of given factors and principles whose own justice lies out of account. As Hegel argues in the *Science of Logic,* [3] if philosophy is to concern itself with truth instead of opinion, it cannot take up its subject matter and method as givens determined outside of and prior to its own inquiry. If they are to be justified, and not arbitrarily assumed, then they must be accounted

for within philosophy. In other words, philosophy, like justice, cannot have any foundations.

What provides the needed elimination of foundations in theory and practice is not the alternative offered by theoretical and practical holism. Although the holist position aptly recognizes the parallel problems of foundationalism in questions of truth and justice, all it offers in answer is a reduction of theoretical and practical normativeness to matters of pragmatic agreement within an ongoing, open-ended conversation of mankind.

4 That, however, only reinstates the foundational dilemma by rooting theory and practice in the pragmatic structure of discourse of whose irreducibility the holist is inexplicably certain. In conceiving the latter as the ultimate basis of all justification, theoretical or practical, the holists not only metaphysically assume that their notion is an accurate account of the reality of conversation, but make it a transcendental ground determining the formation of all normative claims.

Hegel, on the contrary, recognizes that foundationalism can be overcome not by reverting to a sceptical conventionalism, but by taking seriously the problem of freeing theory and practice from givenness.

In the case of theory, Hegel reasons that philosophy can escape the foundational dilemma of unjustified assumptions only by being totally self-grounding. To have this radical independence from all that has not already been philosophically established, philosophy must proceed from no determinate ground whatsoever. This can be achieved, Hegel realizes, only if philosophy begins from indeterminacy, an indeterminacy signifying the absence of all presuppositions concerning both reality and knowing, as well as the content and method of philosophy. From that starting point philosophy can succeed in grounding itself so long as it is systematic, developing both its entire content and method solely in virtue of what gets determined within its own development. Instead of moving from one topic to another in virtue of arbitrary reflections upon what is taken to be given, philosophical discourse must be self-determining, for only by unfolding with total immanence can it avoid relying upon extraphilosophical

assumptions to generate its subject matter and the order of its consideration. Since the immanent development of systematic philosophy proceeds from indeterminacy, its initial self-determination will not be that of some given content, but self-determination *per se,* which is what Hegel calls the Idea.

In the case of practice, however, a specific content is already at hand, namely, the relations of willing individuals to one another. Although the theory of justice addresses the specific dimension of their normativeness, which cannot be derived from any prior con-

ditions, justice nevertheless has as its necessary material condition the existence of nature and willing selves. In Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* and *Philosophy of Spirit,* which follow successively upon his development of the Idea, he claims to have accounted for these non-determining preconditions of justice without violating systematic immanence. Now, addressing justice itself, Hegel recognizes that the problem consists in how the relations between individuals, involving all that nature and selfhood imply, can achieve the added self-grounded character giving them the unconditioned universality justice requires.

Not surprisingly, the answer which allows justice to be distinguished from mere convention is similar to that which allows truth to be distinguished from opinion. Because justice, like philosophy, can have no foundations, but must be its own ground, the relations of justice must be determined entirely through their own process. Since they cannot be prescribed by any independently given factor, the relations of justice must be wholly self-determined. This means that the one and only substance of justice consists of relations of freedom between willing individuals. Freedom can alone provide normativeness in practice, because what is self-determined has unconditioned universality precisely by being determined through itself rather than through any given particular condition.

Accordingly, Hegel concludes that the theory of justice is the philosophy of right. It is philosophy both because philosophical concepts, in their systematic immanence, exhibit the same self-determined character as justice, and because the independence of justice from given circumstance leaves it beyond the grasp of the positive sciences, which investigate only what is given to them. On the other hand, the theory of justice is the philosophy of right, and not the philosophy of goodness and prescribed virtues, to the degree that rights consist in the objectively respected exercise of freedom. Since freedom is the substance of justice, the philosophy of right has as its subject matter nothing but the self-determined reality of the freedom of individuals, which Hegel appropriately calls the Idea of the free will, insofar as the Idea is self-determination *per se.*

Consequently, if history is to have any legitimate place in the philosophy of right, it must be in virtue of the character of freedom in which justice

consists.

History as a Matter of Freedom

In the first instance, what ties history to right is the nonfoundational character freedom must have to be the substance of justice. Because justice is its own ground, freedom cannot be conceived as a principle

out of which the relations of justice are derived. So conceiving it reduces freedom to a determiner of something other than itself, namely, the derivative relations of justice, whereas these equally lose all self-determined character by being determined by a principle of freedom prior to and separate from them. Thus, not only do the derivative structures of justice fail to exhibit the self-determination that would grant them legitimacy, but the principle of freedom lacks a genuinely self-determined character of its own.

Because freedom is here construed as a prior principle determining something other than itself, it stands as a given structure whose act of determination adds nothing new to its character. Since the particular content that gets willed thus falls outside the principle of freedom, that freedom is merely a given universal capacity to choose among independently given alternatives. As such, the freedom in question is a natural capacity of liberty, natural in that its own exercise of willing determines neither its own given form nor the particular contents from which it is at liberty to choose. Consequently, freedom, taken as the principle of justice, has no normativeness of its own, for its very liberty is conditioned both by whatever given array of alternatives lie before it, and by the givenness of its own capacity to choose.

Hegel is well aware that the freedom of justice cannot be reduced to a prior principle of liberty, and that the attempts of classical liberal theory to construct justice on such a basis are fatally flawed from the start. He realizes that so long as the structures of free willing are located in a natural capacity with which all men are born or in a faculty of a noumenal self, freedom and justice will stand apart and forfeit their common normativeness.

Hegel accordingly concludes that normative freedom cannot be a natural or egological given, but must rather consist in the enacted relations of justice themselves. In contrast to liberty, the freedom of justice must be at one with the self-determined relations between individuals comprising the structures of right. Although Hegel does not deny that individuals are endowed with choosing wills irrespective of their relations to one another, he recognizes that actual self-determination can only be achieved in interractions between

individuals where what they will has its particular content not through factors given independently of their freedom, but in virtue of what they will toward one another.

In effect, just as the normativeness of justice requires that freedom be its substance, so self-determination requires that freedom be identical to right. If the will is to escape the heteronomy of liberty, and have a particular end specific to freedom, it must individuate itself through its own act, exhibiting a content exclusively its own, as well as a form common to the will in general. Hegel recognizes that the

only way the will can accomplish this is by entering into a contrasting relation to other wills, wherein each is able to individuate itself as a particular instance of a commonly realized structure of willing. In order for this to occur, the relation between wills cannot be a given condition imposed upon their willing, for then, the particular content of each will would be not self-determined, but determined through a contrasting relation that they have not willed into being. Consequently, free wills must will their relation to one another as part of their own self-determination, and do so in such a way that the relations they enter into with others are voluntarily willed by the latter as well. This means that self-determination irreducibly involves an interaction between individuals, where each wills its own particular end and relation to others by simultaneously honoring the self-determinations which these others will as part of the same relationship. As a result, freedom is itself a structure of right, comprising complementary self-determinations linked through a mutual respect securing each objective reality.

That freedom, the substance of justice, so consists in enacted interactions between individuals sets right in direct relation to history. If, as Hegel has argued, freedom is not given by nature or in virtue of the self, but arises only when individuals choose to interrelate in a certain way, then the domain in which right comes into being is none other than history. Although this does not make historical occurrence a criterion of justice, it does mean that history cannot be a matter of indifference for the theory of justice. The very nonfoundational character of justice leaves it to history alone to realize what ought to be. No natural law or propensity of the self can bring justice into being, so long as freedom is itself an enacted structure of interaction. Consequently, the philosophy of right must certify that freedom can emerge in history, if its own conceptions of right are not to be ideals incapable of coming into being.

Accomplishing this has nothing to do with the impossible task of conceiving in an *a priori* fashion what has happened or will happen in history. Rather, what is at stake is conceiving what historical change must occur if justice is to come into being. Since justice is the reality of freedom, that question is one of conceiving how freedom can arise within history. It

is for this reason that the philosophy of history Hegel develops within the philosophy of right essentially is, and must be, a history of freedom. Strictly speaking, the problem of this history is a purely normative matter, resolution of which is completely independent of past and future events. Indeed, the question of freedom's emergence is not even limited to the particular destiny of Homo sapiens, but concerns a universal development of what ought to be that is applicable to any setting where there are individuals with wills.

Although Hegel himself does not properly emphasize this point, his whole discussion of spirit, which includes justice, has little about it that is species specific. He well recognizes that any attempt to determine thinking and willing through the natural particularities of species being would involve violating their universal nonnatural character. It may be true that the self is necessarily embodied in an animal organism, but that does not mean that the only such organism that can possibly possess a mind and will is a featherless biped. Conversely, simply being a member of the human species does not mean that one has a will and mind with which to enter into relations of right, as is evident in the comatose, the severely retarded, and the insane.

Accordingly, the problem of history that legitimately enters into the philosophy of right is not a question of how men have erected or can erect structures of freedom, but how any thinking and willing selves can do so.

Although this problem can readily be seen to emerge from the philosophical consideration of justice, what is less apparent is that anything philosophical can be said about its resolution. For, if the conventional character of history leaves the actual course of events a matter of willful contingency, how could the historical emergence of freedom ever have any universal form?

Two factors that caution against such scepticism also suggest that Hegel's attempt to conceive the coming into being of freedom is not a hopeless task. First, no past, present, or future events can by themselves mandate what must occur to allow justice to come into being. Their very own facticity precludes their playing any necessary or prescriptive role. Consequently, the task of establishing how freedom can emerge in history involves no immersion in that historical facticity which lies outside conceptual determination.

Second, the two termini circumscribing the problem of freedom's emergence are conceptually available, granted the possibility of a systematic philosophy of nature and spirit. On the one hand, the philosophical conceptions of nature and of individual selves, such as Hegel offers in his philosophy of nature and subjective spirit, comprehend the material with which historical development proceeds. As such, the

conceptions of nature and individual selves provide the philosophically transparent starting point from which the coming into being of freedom must be conceived. On the other hand, the end point of the development at issue is given by the conception of justice itself. The structures of freedom conceived within the philosophy of right are precisely the terminus whose emergence from the givenness of nature and individual selves comprises the whole history of justice's

coming into being. What the normative history of freedom addresses is nothing other than how these relatins of right can arise from those preconditions of history. For this reason, Hegel can only take up the question of the history of freedom at the end of the philosophy of right, after having worked out all the relations of right in which freedom consists.

Accordingly, when the problem of the history of freedom arises, both the starting point and conclusion of that history are already conceptually at hand in the systematic determinations of nature and self, and of right, respectively. What remains to be determined is how, through convention, the latter can come to be from the former.

Admittedly, the starting point at hand, namely the reality of nature and the plurality of selves, offers no more to guide the emergence of justice than the ever present possibility that individuals, endowed with choosing wills, will at some point simply choose to interact in ways that conform to all the relations of right, and do so in a natural setting where geographical, temporal, and other natural differences will add their own particular cast to that conformity.

If there is to be any more definite development of the history of freedom, it must therefore be the result of the structure of its end point, namely the reality of justice. The content of the relations of right must mandate in a conceptually determinate way how they themselves can come into being, if Hegel's enterprise is to be taken seriously. Otherwise, the philosophy of history will be left with nothing more to do than repeat the truism that freedom can arise whenever individuals choose to act in accord with justice.

The Political Character of the History of Freedom

Hegel is well aware that what alone can concretize the history of freedom is the concreteness of justice. Justice, on its part, must be concrete, for only by being a totality unto itself, can justice have the ungrounded character required for normative validity.

Unlike such modem thinkers as Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas, Hegel realizes that the interaction of freedom cannot be construed as a noninstitutional ideal of unrestrained reciprocal recognition that serves as

the legitimating principle for all organs of public life. Doing so only reinstates the foundational dilemmas of liberal theory, once again separating freedom from the reality of justice, and supplanting self-determination with the positing of a prior principle.

To have normative validity the structures of freedom must instead comprise every relation of justice. This means that freedom must not have its measure in a single regulative interrelationship, but rather

consist in a self-grounded system of specific interactions. Although Hegel grants that freedom can be spoken of in general, he recognizes that to do so legitimately requires a categorial development of self-determination *per se,* which properly falls within systematic logic rather than the philosophy of right. In contrast, the Idea of the free will involves no general determination of freedom, but rather a sequential development of the different spheres of right. According to Hegel, the structures that so build freedom's total reality are the distinct interactions of property relations, morality, the family, civil society and the state. If this be accepted, then the coming into being of freedom entails the very determinate matter of generating all these different structures together in the particular relationship that allows them to be a self-grounded totality.

As a consequence, the relationship between the different spheres of right is of primary importance in understanding the manner in which they may arise. In Hegel's conception, this relationship has a dual character, common to the elements of any self-determined whole.

On the one hand, the different spheres of right stand in an order of increasing complexity, in which the less determinate relations form the structural prerequisites incorporated by those more determinate. This ordering follows that of the conceptual development of right, which proceeds from abstract right to morality, the family, civil society, and the state, precisely because no relation can be systematically considered if its presupposed component elements have not already been accounted for.

In this ordering, abstract right comes first insofar as it is the most elementary structure of freedom, incorporating no others in its own relationship, while being presupposed by all the rest. By themselves, property relations simply involve individuals investing their wills in different particular entities which they mutually recognize as the entitled domains of their respective persons. Moral, family, social, and political relations may give the disposal over property added dimensions relative to their own contexts, but they do not themselves constitute the property relations between persons. Rather, all these other structures of right presuppose the existence of property, for if individuals do not already have recognized ownership of at least their own bodily facticity, without which

one is a slave, there is no way their activity can recognizably express their own will to others and allow them to engage in any further exercise of right.

Although this leaves moral relations subsequent to property relations, to the degree that no individual can be held responsible for his actions if they do not belong to him, morality falls second in line since

acting on conscience means acting independently of what family, social, political, or any other objective relations may mandate.

Family relations, by contrast, come third, for they involve adult individuals who already enjoy personhood and moral subjectivity, but do not interact within the family through social or political institutions. Individuals may legally marry and divorce and otherwise employ civil law to regulate their family affairs, but this does not determine the being of the family, but only gives it a publically protected form of legality.

Civil society follows upon the family in that it incorporates the plurality of households within the domain of its economic, legal, and other social activities. It precedes the state, however, because none of its affairs contain the self-governing activity of politics, whose constitutive sovereignty requires that it come last as the sphere of right presupposing all others by ruling over them.

What makes this ordering relevant to the history of freedom is that it reveals how each sphere of right can exist independently of those that incorporate it, but only if those which it encompasses exist as well. For instance, property relations can arise historically without being accompanied by moral relations, households based on freedom, a civil society, or a self-governing state, whereas civil society cannot come into existence until individuals have won their rights as persons, moral subjects, and free family members.

In view of these separate requirements, possible stages in the emergence of freedom can be distinguished, consisting in periods where the spheres of right that have so far been enacted are: (1) property relations alone, (2) property and morality, (3) property, morality, and the free family, (4) property, morality, the free family, and civil society, and finally (5) the free state which incorporates all the other spheres of right within itself. In those periods where certain spheres of right are lacking, the alternative institutions would be determined by factors other than freedom, and could conceivably take any of the countless forms that such illegitimate natural determination might take.

If this provides an *a priori* morphology of the possible way stations in the

history of freedom, it also indicates that the emergence of justice is preeminently a political history. Contrary to the Marxist vision of the just society that terminates a socially determined history, it is here the coming to be of the just state which alone brings into being the totality of freedom.

The self-governing state can play this role, not only because it incorporates all other structures of right within its dominion, but because through its autonomous rule it makes their realization a pro-

duct not of historical accident, but of an activity of freedom falling within justice itself. By securing the property, moral, family, and civil rights of its citizens in conformity with the exercise of their political freedom, the free state thus makes right fully self-grounded by providing a sphere of politics whose freedom posits all the other structures of freedom in reproducing its own.

Due to this totalizing character of the just state, the coming to be of freedom not only has a free political order as its ultimate result, but equally encompasses the possible stages of political development allowing all the necessary structures of self-government to arise. The history of freedom accordingly entails a political morphology differentiating forms of government according to how fully they realize the political institutions of freedom.

The resulting typology has a very different status than that in traditional theories of justice. In general, prior to Hegel, forms of government were discussed as a proper theme of political theory, rather than as a matter of history.

5 Hegel, by contrast, recognizes that because the just state must be unconditionally universal, it can comprise but one invariable form of government. As Hegel notes, its separate powers may exhibit monarchical, oligarchical, and democratic features, but as a whole, the just state has but one form, that of freedom.6 Accordingly, the normative theory of politics gives an account of the just state as such, and not of different forms of government. The normative history of freedom, however, requires their treatment, and it is precisely in that context that Hegel takes them up, recasting the classic forms of government, namely, tyranny, oligarchy, democracy, and monarchy, as possible stages in the development of political freedom.7

Although it may be granted that these different forms of government can be conceptually characterized with respect to their varying realization of the institutions of political freedom, this characterization in no way mandates that they must appear in a fixed sequence, or that the just state requires any

of them in particular as a real precondition for its emergence. All these forms provide are the range of naturally determined body politics which may precede the rise, or for that matter, follow the fall, of the just state. In particular, their catalogue leaves undetermined through what act, if any, the just state can be founded.

This problem of foundation is obviously of key importance in the coming to be of freedom, for it comprises the development which brings that becoming to a close.

What does shed light on this question is the totalizing character of the just state. It entails a second ordering of the structures of right

which is virtually the inverse of the first order of ascending complexity that led from abstract right to politics. This further ordering occurs in terms of the actuality of the state. In virtue of its own activity, the emergent state exists not just as a result of the less concrete structures of right, which can arise before it and which its own rule presupposes. Rather, through its own resultant sovereignty, the state exists as their one and only ground, giving them all a secured realization that none can supply for itself.

In his development of abstract right, morality, and the family, Hegel makes quite clear how they all lack the resources either to determine objectively what each individual is due, or to adjudicate disputes, punish wrongdoers, and retribute victims. Without appeal to a higher public authority, persons no more resolve cases of nonmalicious wrong, fraud, and crime than family members can enforce household obligations and rights to which they are entitled.

8 As for moral subjects, Hegel shows that conscience can never arrive at an objective fulfillment of morality, for all it has to determine the good is its own subjective discretion.9

The case of civil society is ultimately no different. Although the social institutions of civil law and the public administration of welfare do enforce the property, family, and economic rights of individuals, civil society does not contain the legislative power to make the laws carried out within it, nor the elements of constitutionality that can give its public institutions the authority they require.

Only a self-governing state can provide these lacking features through freedom, instead of leaving them to be supplied by illegitimate factors independent of right. In so doing, the self-governing state frees itself from the presuppositions of the other spheres of right by here positing them as elements emanating from its own sovereign rule.

Finally, what seals the independence of the just state is its constitutionality. Such a state rests on nothing but itself insofar as the measure of its own governing activity lies within it in its constitution. Accordingly, the just state not only grounds all other relations of right, but itself as well. Through

this dual achievement, logically foreshadowed in the Idea's totality of categories, the sovereign constitutionality of the state realizes freedom as a self-grounded whole, just as normative validity requires.

This foundation-free character of just politics adds a final specification to the history of freedom. Because the coming to be of justice ultimately entails founding the free state, and because the free state is constitutional, the history of freedom must conclude with the enactment of the just constitution.

The Perplexities of Constitution Making and Their Meaning for the History of Freedom

Although Hegel does not dwell upon constitution making in his thematic discussions of history, he does deal with its problems in his treatment of the state constitution itself. There he raises the principal issues that make constitution making so central and perplexing a problem for the normative history of freedom.

Paradoxically, the importance of constitution making in the emergence of justice directly reflects its utter unimportance in legitimating the structures of right. Clearly, the coming to be of the just state is something different from its actuality, and, as Aristotle pointed out in Book 1 of the *Politics,* conceiving the former is quite a separate task from determining the latter. In light of Hegel's critique of all normative foundationalism, the separation between the founding and the legitimate actuality of the just state is complete. To have normative validity, the state must be self-grounding, and this it achieves when it exists for its own sake as the self-determined totality of right that has its standard of legitimation within itself, in its own constitution. Accordingly, what makes the state just cannot be the manner in which it has come into existence, but the structure it actually possesses. Since that actuality must be an end in itself to be just, any attempt to base the state's legitimacy in the procedure of its creation automatically undercuts its normative validity by grounding it in something other than its own constitutional politics. For this reason, all procedural theories of justice, be they social contract conceptions or not, are incapable of determining political freedom and must be discarded.

Hegel recognizes that the radical demarcation of the state's legitimation from its coming into being means that the founding of the state is not itself a relation of right, but a matter of history, subject to all the contingencies that involves.

Furthermore, he realizes, the self-active character of the just state excludes constitution making from its own domain of political freedom. For politics to have the normative validity of action for its own sake, the end that citizens freely will must be nothing other than the realization of self-

government, which is the very framework in which they engage in political action in the first place. To exercise political freedom, the citizen must already be situated within the constitutional institutions comprising self-government. What gives them their normative character as organs of self-rule is that the only way citizens can act in their context is by governing themselves, and thereby willing precisely that context.

The willing into being of the constitution, however, is by its very

character an unconstitutional act, exercised by an agent who does not will his constituting action as an end in itself, but as a means for producing something that does not already exist, namely a new political order whose own constitutional activity is completely distinct from the constituting activity responsible for its foundation. Therefore, enacting a constitution is not an activity for its own sake, enjoying the special normative validity of political action, but one of making, which acts in explicit indifference to its own given context in order to will another as the authentic framework of justice.

In this regard, any government that gives one, some, or all citizens the power to determine the constitution destroys the justice of the state. It introduces into the political domain a willing that does not act for its own sake, realizing the constitutional order in which political freedom consists, but instead exercises an unrestrained arbitrariness that makes government whatever it pleases. If one takes seriously Hegel's foundation-free concept of politics, one is forced to conclude that there can be no power of constitutional amendment in the just state. This must be excluded not only because it would leave the structure of the state subject to the arbitrariness of choice, but because the just constitution is, as such, unconditionally universal, and hence valid under all circumstances. Only an unjust constitution deserves to be amended, and the only legitimate object of its amendment can be the enactment of the just constitution, which needs no alteration.

For these reasons, what falls within the prerogative of self-government is the legislation, authorization, and execution of positive laws that do not alter the constitution, but realize it in face of those conditions relevant to justice that are inherently changeable, such as foreign affairs, the state of the economy, and so on.

10 Citizens are legitimately free to determine all matters of positive law, but that freedom exists only through the just constitution, which is itself no matter of choice. Political legislation has the task of making inherently alterable, rescindable laws, which, as such, deal with what is open to change itself. Here, as Hegel points out,11 personal opinion, rather than reason, comes legitimately into play. The changeable conditions that require

legislation can only be perceived in given experience, whereas the framing of laws in response to the perceived situation must rely on the discretion of subjective judgment to determine laws that apply the conceptually determinate constitution to the particular circumstances at hand. The just state thus has a history of its own, consisting not in the enactment or alteration of its constitution, but in the positive legislation and governing that proceed on its basis. By contrast, the power legislating constitutions falls outside the just state. As Hegel remarks in his lectures on the *Philosophy of Right,*[12] that power

is history itself, the history of freedom's emergence which precedes the history of the just state's own positive legislation.

Although this conclusion follows readily enough from the very character of constitutional government, the relegation of constitution making to history seems to call into question the constitutive autonomy of the just state, and with it, the history of freedom consisting in its emergence. The very fact that political freedom does not include the right to determine the constitution would appear to contradict the self-determined character the state must have to be normatively valid. For if political action cannot determine the constitutional order of the state, but must receive it from history, then it would seem that the political order is not self-ordering, but preordained by the prior historical action that brings the constitution into being. How then can the state retain normative validity when, instead of being self-deter-mined, it appears to be naturally determined in the sense that its own form is given independently of political freedom?

The whole project of justice here seems to collapse in an insurmountable antinomy. If justice is to come into being, and the philosophy of right is to be more than speculative fiction, then there must be a history of freedom culminating in the enactment of the just constitution. Yet, if the state can only issue from a preceding process of constitution making, it would appear that the state can never have the self-determined character required for normative validity. In other words, the very way the just state must arise makes it impossible for the state to be just.

There is but one solution to this dilemma, a solution already at hand in Hegel's concept of the free state. In a word, the state can be both self-determined and the product of an historical constitution making if its constitutional order is one that comprises a regime of self-government where citizens freely will the realization of those same institutions in which they must already stand in order to exercise the right of political self-determination. Even though their activity is here restricted to enacting, authorizing, and executing positive laws, it realizes the constitution as a state existing for no sake other than its own self-government. Therefore political freedom here has itself as its end, as the continual product of its

own activity, if only by coinciding with and conforming to a constitution it can never bring into being, but must always already possess.

On these terms, the historically enacted constitution is itself but a meaningless piece of paper unless citizens actually engage in the practice of constitutional self-government, which alone allows politics to be a self-activity consisting in the exercise of political freedom. Instead of outruling one another, the foundation of the just state and the normative actuality of the state are inseparable correlates. The

just constitution has not come into actual being, unless it stands realized in a political order of freedom, whereas the state cannot have the legitimate constitutionality it needs to be self-grounded, unless history has provided it with its constitution. The character of each is such that it is simply impossible for there to be one without the other. Thus the just state is, and can only be, both self-determined and dependent upon history for the enactment of its constitution.

This unavoidable solution to the ostensible antinomy of constitution making thereby redeems the history of freedom, but at the same time introduces a further feature that, at first sight, is utterly perplexing. Hegel stresses it time and time again

13 in claiming that, properly speaking, the constitution of the just state cannot be made at all. This seems to be a contradiction in terms, since the constitution is not a natural given, but a product of convention that must be enacted to come into being. Hegel is well aware that the constitution, as the objectively recognized conceptual specification of the state, can only be enacted by being willed into being. He nevertheless argues against thinking of the constitution as the product of making because he realizes that it cannot come into existence simply in virtue of the willing of a single agency. Although a Napoleon or a Stalin may unilaterally impose their constitutions for republics and peoples' democracies, no such imposition can make a constitution the internal standard of a just state on the force of its own command alone.

On the one hand, a constitution can have no reality as that of a just state if the nonpolitical structures of tight, namely the valid relations of property, morality, the family, and civil society, are not themselves in place, and the process of their formation is something quite separate from the ordaining of a constitution that pre-eminently determines the political order.

On the other hand, no unilaterally willed constitution can have a just reality if the prospective citizens of the state do not engage in constitutional self-government, but instead treat the constitution as a piece of paper signifying either the decree of illegitimate domination, or the unobserved fiction of a

powerless regime. Only the multilateral actions of citizens can comprise the self-ordered state and guarantee that the just constitution is in actuality just that.

For these reasons, Hegel can tightly say that the founding of a just constitution is the product of the development of the entire life of its citizenry, involving the eventual multilateral enactment of all spheres of right.[14] Although at some point a constitution will have to be made, this act will found the just state only in conjunction with the political recognition of citizens and their establishment of free personal, moral, household, and civil relations among themselves. Then, the enactment of the constitution will indeed usher in the culminating stage

of the history of freedom, for it will have proceeded upon the liberation of all spheres of right from natural determination and their reconstitution as structures of freedom. By combining these two sides of liberation and constitution, the founding of the state will comprise the genuine revolution, not the revolution that rises out of social necessity to impose a new class rule in preparation for the withering away of the state, but the revolution that strips away all grounded, conditioned modes of interaction and then constitutes the positive reality of freedom in its political totality. The normative history of freedom has this as its end, for the emergence of justice involves nothing else.

Systematic versus Interpretative History

Certainly, Hegel's discussion of history does not limit itself to the systematic problems of freedom's coming into being. In the *Philosophy of Right,* and especially in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History,* he turns to the recorded facticity of human history, and considers its significance in regard to the history of freedom. Often it seems as if Hegel has conflated the two, and deduced particular events from the requirements of what must occur if justice is to come into being. If this were what Hegel was doing, his discussion of various peoples and epochs would fall victim to the problem of metaphysical construction.

There is, however, a dimension to Hegel's treatment of recorded history that escapes this confusion. Although the *a priori* theory of history which falls within the philosophy of right is a normative conception having no direct relation to the course of human events, it can serve as a framework for interpreting that course, to the degree that human history has given rise to the universal structures of right.

There may be no necessity that the development of mankind ever bring justice into being, but if modernity, for instance, happens to have realized important features of property relations, morality, the free family, civil society, and constitutional self-government, then the *a priori* concepts of the history of freedom can have a descriptive power in the interpretation of past events. Nevertheless, such an interpretive discussion is not an exercise of systematic philosophy, but only an exercise of interpretation, bound to all

the limits of any hermeneutic situation. It involves an application of rational categories to a perceived facticity that must rely on subjective judgment to make connections as much as in the making of positive law. If one recognizes this decisive limitation, and distinguishes the interpretation of recorded history from the conception of the history of freedom, both

can make their respective contributions without conflicting with one another.

In view of this, it is important to note that Hegel begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* with the declaration that they follow from the *postulate* that there is reason in history.

15 If this is to be understood in a non-metaphysical way, it signifies that Hegel intends to engage in an *interpretation* of past history, proceeding from his own subjective estimation that Western history has been a history of freedom's emergence and can therefore fruitfully be discussed by applying the systematic concept of the history of freedom to the perceived facticity of recorded events. Accordingly, the resulting discussion does not properly fall within the philosophy of right, as a systematic theory of how justice can come into being. It rather falls outside philosophy entirely, as an interpretive application of philosophical concepts to facts that must be experienced and related to be known.

For precisely this reason, one can argue endlessly over Hegel's interpretation of the past without ever reaching unequivocal answers. Where subjective judgment must be employed to reach conclusions, the unconditioned normative validity of conceptual thought can never be attained. Nevertheless, Hegel's interpretations cannot be ignored in deference to his systematic arguments, for we as citizens must similarly orient ourselves to the facticity of modernity and judge to what extent its history has been a history of freedom and what remains to be done. As thinkers, it is our task to conceive the structures of right in the self-grounding discourse of philosophy. As citizens, it is our responsibility to erect and safeguard a self-grounded state of freedom. Because the reality of justice can always be overturned if enough individuals choose to do so, the history of freedom is always an open one in practice. It may be theoretically conceivable once and for all, but its realization in practice is an ever present political task.

Although the history of freedom falls within time, it holds valid for all eternity. Therefore, no matter where we stand in the order of events, we

have the opportunity of redeeming the transience of our practice by enacting the timeless conventions of justice. Only then will we have made history in which there is reason.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford, 1967), par. 227, and its addition.

2. Ibid., par. 2 and the note to par. 3.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic,* trans. A. V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969), pp. 67 ff. (”With What Must the Science Begin?”).

4. For a leading example of the holist position, see Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University 1979), pt. 3.

5. Plato is an exception to the rule, and in Book 8 of the *Republic,* he accounts for the different forms of government in terms of the history that results from the dissolution of the ideal polis.

6. See *Philosophy of Right,* note to par. 273.

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind,* trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), note to par. 544.

8. See *Philosophy of Right,* pars. 82ff., 102, 176.

9. Ibid., pars. 137-41.

10. Admittedly, in par. 298 of the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel suggests that positive legislation contributes to the further becoming of the constitution. This further development is only consistent with constitutionality and the unconditioned universality of the just state if it involves the further *realization* of the constitution in relation to changing circumstances, rather than an actual alteration of the constitution itself.

11. See *Philosophy of Right,* par. 301.

12. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie: Vierter Band,* ed. K.-H. Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Fromman-Holzboog, 1974), p. 696.

13. See *Philosophy of Right,* note to par. 273, and note and addition to par. 274.

14. Ibid., note to par. 273, par. 274.

15. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History,* trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), p. 9.

Comment, by Harry Brod

Appreciating Hegel always requires a sensitivity to context. Gross misinterpretations have resulted from reading Hegel's remarks in isolation from the texts that surround them. By insisting that we approach Hegel's philosophy of history from the context of his philosophy of right, where Hegel himself situates it, Professor Winfield opens the way to a potentially rich appreciation of this philosophy of history. His own analysis goes a long way toward fulfilling this potential, and I believe the further questions raised by this analysis will prove highly fruitful though, as I shall make clear in the course of my remarks, I have some questions about the way this analysis proceeds at particular points.

Professor Winfield's paper combines two problems. He approaches his topic by arguing that a problem about Hegel's philosophy of history can be resolved by noting that this philosophy of history is dependent on Hegel's philosophy of right. Specifically, the charge that Hegel's theory of history is an *a priori* construction is answered by showing that it is rather "part of a normative theory of what ought to occur." Since this on its face seems to assert what Hegel specifically denies in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*"it must be poles apart from an attempt to construct a state as it ought to be"it seems to me that this point requires further elaboration.

But the bulk of Professor Winfield's analysis is really devoted to the inverse proposition: that a problem about Hegel's philosophy of right can be resolved by noting that this philosophy of right is dependent on Hegel's philosophy of history. I shall accordingly focus my remarks here as well. To follow Professor Winfield's analysis,

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Hegel's critique of "foundationalism" arises because Hegel realizes that, if the claims of justice are to have the unconditioned universality we would wish to accord them, they cannot be derived from any prior principles, either of nature or convention. The Hegelian requirement that justice be self-grounding entails that its telos be the objectification of the subjective relations of reciprocally willing individuals, which are its genesis. The process of this objectifying realization is precisely the ground of history, which can then be the only arena in which justice can emerge. According to Professor Winfield, the task of a Hegelian philosophy of history is to demonstrate the possibility of this emergence. The convergence of the conceptual (synchronic) and historical (diachronic) developments of the concepts of right is then what Hegel calls the Idea of Right, the subject matter of the *Philosophy of Right.*

But this relationship of will to will cannot be merely subjective or interpersonal. It must be objective and institutionalized. These institutions must encompass the totality of the lives of the individuals who participate in them, again because of the universality of right. Hence a "morphology" of totalizing states emerges from Hegel's philosophy of history. And it is here, at the question of the proper institutionalization of Hegelian relations of justice, that I would like to probe Professor Winfield's thesis both by using his analysis as a point of departure and by suggesting that perhaps he has not stated quite strongly enough his claim for the necessity of a historical grounding for the concepts of the philosophy of right.

Professor Winfield's analysis shows that Hegel resolves the antinomy between anarchic voluntarism and tradition-bound constitutionalism by maintaining that the citizens must "freely will the realization of those same institutions in which they must already stand." But, following an insight Professor Winfield himself insists on, this cannot be merely a subjective willing. It must also be reflected in institutional configurations. Accordingly, the key task of the institutions of the Hegelian state, if its method of justification is to succeed, must be to engender in the consciousness of its citizens the requisite political consciousness for this willing to occur. It cannot simply be sufficient for the Hegelian philosopher to appreciate this mode of justification. We may recall that the Hegelian

state incorporates the idea of the pedagogic state, which was a common theme of German idealism. Such a state's fundamental aims are conceived, not in terms of adherence to individual rights, nor in terms of the satisfaction of material interests, but rather in terms of the creation of a satisfactory ethical consciousness. If one then wishes to evaluate Hegel's political philosophy on its own terms, the key criterion by which to measure the institutions of the Hegelian state (the objective institutions of the

legislature, bureaucracy, and monarchy as well as the subjective institutions of patriotism, religion, and public opinion) is their degree of success in engendering precisely this self-consciousness as political agents of its citizens. Between the two poles of criticism of Hegel's political philosophy, one of which argues that only the few philosophers are really satisfied in the Hegelian state, and the other of which claims that Hegelian politics requires that all citizens be philosophers, lies the Hegelian middle, which identifies institutional structures, rather than individual mental states, as the locus of political consciousness. Though I cannot present such an interpretation here, I believe the perspective presented by Professor Winfield suggests a very fruitful interpretive perspective for the *Philosophy of Right.* To give just two examples relevant to the philosophy of history under discussion here, the critique of economism which motivates the transition from civil society to the state can be understood as a transition from an ahistorical, "state of nature" concept of self to a develop-mental-historical self-understanding. Furthermore, the function of the monarchy as a force that mediates a world-historical consciousness to the citizens of the Hegelian state by serving as the focus of recognition vis-à-vis other states has been given insufficient attention. By raising the question of the relation between the citizens' attitudes toward their own political agency and the state's genesis in historical processes, Professor Winfield's remarks on the problems of creating a constitution invite such attention.

Professor Winfield has clearly done us a service by providing this perspective. Given the temporal limitations of this conference, he cannot be expected to have pursued his line of reasoning in the manner and detail I have proposed. However, I find myself wondering whether there is another reason, one less simply pragmatic and more philosophically significant, for his failure to pursue this line of investigation, a reason that might require some qualifications in accepting his thesis as presented. The rest of my remarks will be devoted to this question.

Put briefly, I question whether too much attention to the problem with which Professor Winfield begins his paper has skewed his results in investigating his second problem. In attempting to absolve Hegel of the charge of *a priorism,* Professor Winfield underestimates the degree of

necessity to which Hegel's philosophy of history *must* produce the kind of state presented in the *Philosophy of Right.* His reconstruction of the intent of Hegel's philosophy of history has too Kantian a flavor. It seems more a teleological judgment that we may have a right and even an obligation to impute to history on moral grounds, rather than an empirically validated analysis of history. Hegel's rejection of naive empiricism is not a rejection of the empirical dimen-

sion of history. Hegel *does* accept the obligation of being true to empirical facts. Furthermore, it does not just "happen" that modernity has realized the essential features of the Hegelian state. While there is a great deal of subjective latitude in producing a Hegelian philosophy of history (we know that Hegel himself changed periodizations and inserted or omitted different facts as he delivered his course of lectures in different semesters), this philosophy of history in its broad outlines, on the level of generality found in the *Philosophy of Right,* for example, is a necessary development. It cannot fall "outside philosophy entirely." Otherwise the *Philosophy of Right,* as I believe Professor Winfield in fact demonstrates, remains ungrounded. While the proposition that there is reason in history is *initially* a postulate, the empirical course of history, comprehended through the appropriate categories, validates this hypothesis, and it does not remain simply a regulative idea.

I fear that what I am calling this overly Kantian reading of Hegel leads Professor Winfield to treat the question of the citizens' willing the institutions and constitution of the state in too subjective a manner, despite his own criticisms on this score of Arendt and Habermas from a Hegelian perspective. Hence the citizens' willing becomes more a question of their moral conscience than of the institutional arrangements of the state which could ground such willing in actual political participation. Professor Winfield's Kantian reading of Hegel emerges in other minor points as well. Given his own remarks on the philosophy of nature as initial terminus for the philosophy of history, I fail to see what is meant by the statement that this philosophy of history is not species specific. And to say that individuals have "ownership" of "their own bodily facticity" seems to me to violate those passages of the Abstract Right section of the *Philosophy of Right* that argue for a far more immediate relation between self and body than that inherent in the concept of "ownership." Both these remarks seem more true of Kant than of Hegel.

In summary, I believe that the Hegelian philosophy of history is more directly embodied in factual necessity than Professor Winfield's analysis acknowledges. While I do not think this invalidates the basic interpretive

thrust of Professor Winfield's paper, I do think it necessitates some reformulations of certain particular points, as I have indicated.

Chapter Seven
The Dialectic in Hegel's Philosophy of History

Role Ahlers

Significance of Hegel's Philosophy of History

The prevailing view of history is characterized by a double irony: The first irony is that our Western bourgeoisie accuses Hegel's view of history of that same mythology of automatic progress in history in which it most fervently believes. The second irony is that the prevailing forms of Marxism have, contrary to Marx, taken over from the bourgeoisie precisely that mechanistic view of automatic progress which can be traced neither to Marx nor to Hegel.

It is understandable that, during the second half of the nineteenth century, under the influence of Comte's positivistic understanding of an automatic, triadic progression of unconscious history, as well as Darwin's evolutionary theory of the progression of life-formsguaranteeing, analogous to the cause-effect scheme of nature, automatic ascendency to that form which is successfulHegel's "cunning of reason" could be misinterpreted as just such a mechanistic "external" automaton. For he did believe in world-historical progression from oriental subjugation (the *Kindesalter* of the spirit), to the Greek emergence of partial freedom (*Jünglingsalter*), to the third stage of the "virile age" (*Mannesalter*) of the Roman Empire in which youthful freedom gained concrete generality in social and civil orders, to the fourth and final "old age" (*Greisenalter*) of the birth of modem subjectivity which, contrary to physical old age, gains significant power through the subject's knowledge of self.

1 Both the Darwinian and the positivistic views of historical progression make the claim that the inner workings

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of necessary, regular historical development can be described scientifically by just looking at it. It is plainly in evidence before the eyes of the viewer. In viewing, subjective consciousness is not part of that progression, which is therefore automatic, "blind," and without spirit: this view has become an ideology of necessary betterment, accumulation of wealth and freedom, having gained the status of a law of nature, a dignity to which one must blindly submit. It is an ideology, as Marx had seen, because it serves a purpose other than what it proclaims. This unacknowledged motive is the idea of the inevitable, and therefore legitimate, success of the bourgeoisie over the preceding feudal nobility. With this ideology, the bourgeoisie accomplished the intellectual metamorphosis of its subjective struggle for freedom and equality into an objective, immutable law with the same certainty as a law of nature. That ascendency, now underwritten by a law of such certainty, has discreetly moved from center stage of the conscious participation in historical processes. The bourgeoisie's new posture is now guaranteed by the ideological maneuver of placing itself behind the prop of historical automation. It directs the drama of necessary historical development in history, thereby guaranteeing its own social and economic posture, and it does so by never entering the stage but rather presenting that drama as an unalterable and uncontestable law. The subject has ceased to participate consciously in the struggle for equality and freedom. Marx had with great clarity seen the two aspects of this one development.

In the second irony lies the propriety and legitimacy of Marx's thought. Merleau-Ponty therefore rightly says, "Marxism cannot hide the spirit in matter."

2 The historical development of Marxism was able to do so, however. The irony that dialectical materialism has decayed into an undialectical, quasi natural law is related to the circumstance that the bourgeoisie asserted its ideology even over against the proletariat. Historical Marxism should have found its greater authority in its critique of an ideology of automatic progress, as well as any segment of such an idea, such as that might makes right. However, orthodox Marxism chose to fight like with like, hiding in a manner uncharacteristic of Marx the spirit in the matter of the "dialectic," that is, automatic progress of economic history. This process is capable of

scientific objectification, and its necessity and determinants are observable as objective givens, just as in the case of the bourgeois ideology of the automatic progress of history.[3] Only because of this development is it explainable how the East must suppress all significant stirrings of the spirit and subjectivity, all spontaneous revolutions and must, on the other hand, do everything it can to bolster up the right of its system with the might of military hardware, much as does the West. Diamat has become a subjectless, and thus unhistor-

ical, theory of history. Hegel's view of history offers, as we shall see, a model of the interactive "play" of the "many nations" among each other, a dialogue not needing the artificial assertion of military might as a mask of unexpressed and uncommunicative weakness.

The origin of this deviation from Marx is Engel's understanding of history. He differentiates, as do Hegel and Marx, between nature and free agency as characteristics of historical processes. Contrary to the "unconscious, blind… lawfulness" characteristic of nature, the "history of society" is characterized by conscious-agency, by people who "with reflection or passion labor toward definite purposes."

[4] Nevertheless, Engels continues, these observations apply only to single events or epochs. But observing them "cannot change the fact that the progression of history is dominated by inner, general laws."[5] The subjective, conscious pursuit of definite goals is only a surface phenomenon, only the appearance of the determined flow of history, analogous to determined laws of nature, in which chance and volition have no room. "In this way the confrontations of the countless individual wills and individual actions in the area of history produce a situation which is altogether analogous to that of unconscious nature. The purposes of [historical] actions are willed, but the results which in reality follow out of actions are not willed."[6] If the surface appearance presents chance and contingency of causation, the broad movements of history disclose hidden laws, and it is the task of the historian to discover these laws. In this fashion Hegel's understanding of "world-history as the progress in the consciousness of freedoma progress which we have to recognize in its necessity"[7] has in both East and West been abridged to only one of its dimensions: necessity. With that reduction both history and dialectic have been abandoned. What is the nature of Hegel's dialectic of history?

History as the Dialectic of Time and Concept

The Enlightenment, Rousseau, and Kant on Historical Progress

Hegel conceived history as the necessary progress in the consciousness of freedom. We are confronted in this idea with two essential antinomies in the

Enlightenment's understanding of history: (1) Progress in history is inevitable because it is comparable to a law of nature. But the idea of linear and uninterrupted and inevitable continuity excludes *a limine* any significant participation of the moral subject. For Rousseau and Kant, this antinomy became decisive. (2) But that idea of inevitable progress is related to a second antinomy that became just as decisive: the notion of perfectibility. The idea of an infinite succession of circumstances leading to perfection *a limine*

precludes the arrival at the goal. In Hobbes and Leibniz, these two antinomies gained form: Hobbes displaced the traditional *summum bonum* of man, the highest, eternally restful condition, the criterion of all life, with an anthropology that understands man as driven by natural needs: human history consequently consists of man's being driven on from fulfillment of needs to creation of new ones to their fulfillment, and so on *ad infinitum.* The bourgeoisie's claim to world-historical significance was satisfied in its own mind by having basic needs fulfilled. Leibniz provides the other key idea of perfectibility: it is man's nature to proceed (historically) *ad infinitum* from joy to joy. Again here, the traditional Aristotelian standards had been surrendered: man and nature are no longer perfect because they are at heart unchangeable. To the contrary: perfection rests in changeability understood in the sense of (infinite) perfectibility. But perfection proceeding *ad infinitum* is, as the young Hegel had already observed in his *Systemfragment* of 1800, a "being driven on without any point of rest".

8 If this "progress" is not "guided" to a well-defined goal, there is no progress at all. These two basic antinomies can be summarized in this way: history understood as an inevitable progress analogous to the stringency of natural processes excludes *a limine* human participation and moral engagement. But is it possible to speak of progress in history without subjective involvement toward betterment? Stated more positively: the law of automatic progress would immediately be refuted if the subject should become operative to influence or change it. The second antinomy is equally weighty: infinite progress toward perfection excludes all perfection. This progress "will," as Hegel observed again in 1822, "eternally remain distant from its goal,"9 for it is altogether "without purpose and goal: the better and more perfect, toward which it is supposed to progress, is altogether undetermined."10 For this reason it is impossible to speak of progress in the context of this idea of infinite progress.

In the second half of the eighteenth century these antinomies were resolved by Rousseau's formulation of the dialectical understanding of history: the origin of social perfectibility is moral corruption of the species. The subject is involved, but regressively. If progress can be determined objectively, it is

achieved by subjective regress. Kant picked up this clue from Rousseau and modified it: the transition from the unreflective "roughness" of the state of nature to the state of culture and reason "is a *progress* of the species humanity from worse to better, but not for the individual".[11] "The history of *nature* thus begins with the good, for it is the *work of God*; but the history *of freedom* begins with evil, for it is the *work of man.* For the individual, using freedom only in relation to itself, this change was a loss; but for nature, which sees in the species humanity its purpose, it was a gain." [12]

Hegel's Dialectic of Historical Progress

It is at this point that Hegel's philosophy of history has its origin: "The concept of the spirit is return (sic) into itself to make itself its object." This "return" or "regress" has the purpose of specifying the nature and purpose and goal of spirit or freedom. It is therefore an individualizing, subjectivating, liberating movement. "Therefore this progressing is no indefinite [progress] into infinity, but it has rather a purpose, namely the return into itself. For this reason we have here also a certain circularity. The spirit seeks itself."

13 It is the nature of spirit or freedom "to objectivate and to grasp itself."14 Spirit is not spirit, freedom is not freedom, if it does not grasp its own nature and necessary essence. Freedom can be defined as the act of grasping one's own essential nature, and this act is necessary if freedom is to be free. Nature and spirit, necessity and freedom, progress and regress, generality and specificity, as well as the ideal and the real, are here dialectically related.

Man must grasp and specify the nature of his humanity, that is, freedom. Man is, in the tradition of natural law (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau), defined as free by nature. The corollary of this theorem is that he is unfree in civilization and in the state. Hegel refutes this juxtaposition of freedom-in-nature and unfreedom-in-civility and state.15 To be sure, the statement that man is free by nature is correct. It is correct in the sense that the very essence, nature, and concept of humanity is freedom. But that means that freedom in this essential "natural" state is not definite, specified, concrete freedom but rather only freedom "in itself."16 It is freedom in its immediate or "unmediated" state of nature. Stated differently, this freedom is altogether useless, "raw," "arbitrary," and therefore a potential source of violence and slavery. Spirit does not yet exist in this state of nature. If we can concede that "by nature" man is free and spiritual, we can do so only in the sense that spirit is understood "in its natural condition [and this] condition is one of unfreedom and sensual intuition."17 Freedom, postulated in a state of unmediated nature, exists only "conceptually" and hence abstractly. Freedom becomes real only through the process of mediation.

Hegel illustrates this process of mediation in the realm of a cultural growth, but also in religion.[18]

The process of mediation is "infinite." Mediation is a "limitation" of sorts,[19] but this limitation must be understood, not in the sense of an abridgment, but rather definition and specification of freedom. Without such mediating definition, the state of nature remains a state of "injustice, violence," a state of unfettered drives of nature.[20] In short, that supposedly "free" state of nature is in reality a state of lack of freedom. If freedom can be conceded to exist in that state, it

is not yet specified, but rather "wild" and therefore unfree. We could characterize the dynamic of the realization of freedom in this way: (1) Basic drives and multiple "desires" exist in an individual and in a people. Because of the plurality of goals, a people remains diffuse, uncoordinated in its cultural endeavor until (2) it produces a "work," for example, the state, through which it mediates its multiple activities and "desires."

21 Without such mediation, Chronos will simply eat up its own children, that is, time will cause a people to vanish. In this mediation, (3) a two-directional dialectic happens: (a) the people or the individual externalizes itself in its "work"22 and thus provides specificity and definition to its multiple and diffuse desires and activities. The culture begins to understand itself and "grasp its concept" through that external object. That means (b) that the subject or the culture internalizes the "civil work," the conditions of its own existence, qualifying and finding its own identity through the mediation of that work; therewith it provides specificity and definition to its own existence. The spirit returns to itself, grasping its concept, in both outward and inward directions. It is imperative to see that, in this two-directional dialectic, "freedom" is gained: "wild" and "vauge" and "multiple" desires are channeled, institutionalized, focused in a culture's "world."

It is not correct to understand this process as a mere limitation of freedom in the sense of socialization of basic drives, in which case society would be given priority and freedom would only be understood as a conditional, not real, freedom. Hegel, to the contrary, intends to understand history and society as something "produced" by the subject itself23 in order that freedom may be gained. If history and society do exist prior to this "self-production" of the spirit, it can at best be called a "prehistory,"24 and "unhistorical history."25 This is also the reason why Hegel writes: "The spirit cannot be satisfied with the existence of an order, a cult. What it wills is… knowledge of its determinants. Only in this way does the spirit establish itself into the unity of its subjectivity with its objectivity."26

This means that it is not enough for a culture to have traditions of law, religion, and so forth. Such a cultural life belongs altogether to the realm of

“prehistory” as long as the spirit and free subjectivity of a people does not claim that life as its own and does not thoughtfully determine the generality of that cultural life in all its specificity. “The highest point of the education [*Bildung*] of a people is this, to grasp also the thought of its life and condition, its science, its laws, its fights and civility. For in this unity lies the innermost unity, in which spirit can be itself. The “work” of a culture must be to “have itself as its own object.” A people is historical only “in thinking itself.”[27] “Thinking” itself, a people has established the principle generality in its

specificity. In another context Hegel speaks about the fourth stage of this process of historization as mankind's feat of "putting itself on its head, *i.e.* standing on thought and thus realizing itself."

28

The Dialectic of Time and Concept

Chronos brings forth everything but also eats up its own children.29 This inevitable corrosiveness of time is misunderstood if one sees reality as arising and vanishing "in" time. Time itself is rather this arising and vanishing. Hegel can therefore say that time is this "*existing abstraction*,"30 *the "empty intuition" (leere Anschauung)*.31 Time is the abstracting process of reality itself. Corresponding to it dialectically is the movement of concretion and determination: only because of this correspondence can history arise "of necessity" and the ravages of time be opposed effectively. If time is the negative, abstracting power of everything, then the concept is in time more powerful still, the concretizing "negation of the negation" which affirms conditionally the negativity of time (by itself, i.e., apart from that correlation to time, the concept, as we shall see, is also abstracting).

The dialectic of time and concept is for this reason central to Hegel's understanding of history. The transcendental foundation of the conditions of freedom and human rights had been established by Rousseau's general will, the substantive ground of all right. Kant had, with his Copernican Revolution of thought, provided the transcendental foundation of consciousness. The transcendental unity of thought in Kant's "I think" is the second element, the counterpart to Rousseau's abstracting "general will." Both elements together formulated in Hegel's philosophy of history the dialectic of time and concept.32

We can characterize the dialectic of time and the concept in this way: the activity of the concept, the very essence and nature of historical reality, reveals itself in history. That revelation is the concept's self-identification. Hegel says: "That which the concept teaches is shown just as well necessarily in history."33 It is the inner dynamic of history to reveal its very concept. The concept is the truth and essence not only of individual things,

people, or phenomena in history, but of history as a whole. The evolution of history specifies and defines that truth and essence, which, apart from that specification is abstract and vague. It is the nature of the concept to judge and to define: for that reason that defining specification is the concept's own doing. In the dimension of history, the work of the concept therefore consists essentially of self-definition and self-specification. Opposing this disclosure-impetus of history's essence stands time. It is possible for a culture to be altogether at the mercy of time. If that is the case, then it is not subject to the "power of the concept," but rather it exists

merely in its “prehistorical” dimension.

34 In that case the concept is not revealed, but rather the flow of time diffuses and destroys the essence into its “not.” The state is the highest form of the concept’s self-specification, achieved only in the fourth stage of world historybut since it is itself a product of history, the state is understood by Hegel to be only the transcendental condition of the historical interaction of the “many states,” as we shall see below. A people that might form a nation or a clan but lacks enough strength to form a state, and that therefore ”does not pursue a firm purpose,” “succumbs to the unhistorical might of time.”35 In that sense, Hegel can say that “time, as the negative unity of the state-of-being-external-to-self is simultaneously something altogether abstract, ideal.”36

It is important to qualify this “negative doing” of time as the “abstract subjectivity.” If we take the categories “space” and “time,” space would be “abstract objectivity,” while time would be “abstract subjectivity.”37 “Time is the same principle as the I=I of pure self-con-sciousness.”38 This “negative unity of being external to self”39 is a clear reference to the transcendental unity of Kant’s subject, the condition of all experience of reality. Related to this absolute status of the subjectivity is the Copernican Revolution of the Kantian understanding of man: the one fight of the civil society guarantees human dignity and freedom to all. For Kant, this fight no longer realizes the human highest good or virtue or joy or happiness. Rather, the fight of freedom transcendentally abstracts from these anthropological aspects of the previous metaphysic. Hegel knew, however that Kant’s (and also Fichte’s) transcendental subject had to exist outside of time in order to be able to produce the *a priori* forms of space and time in terms of which the empirical reality is known. The very *a priori* nature of time reduces time, in Kant, to the timeless condition of all temporal reality. Hegel, in contrast, emphasizes: “The real is indeed different from time but at the same time identical with it.”40 For this reason Hegel can also say “not *in* time do all things arise and vanish, but rather time itself is this becoming, arising and vanishing.”41 For this reason “no real difference” exists as yet in those things that are subject to time alone.42 For the pure negativity of time

relates abstractly all things that are subjected by time. For this reason also time, understood as “abstract subjectivity,” is the generalizing, all-leveling “negativity” that “externalizes” all reality, that is, prevents reality from finding its conceptual identity and specificity.

Here now we encounter the “power of time,” that is, the power over time: the concept.[43] It is the “truth,” the “idea,” the “spirit” of reality and history. It is important to highlight the time-opposing quality of the concept: “The concept… in its identity, existing freely for itself, [is the] I=I.”[44] It *also* is negative, abstracting, “idea,” “sub-

jective," but the subjective concept is only one side of the absolute concept which has interest in promoting in history the substance of the concept.

45 Therefore its function is to identify, to overcome the diffusing and leveling ravages of time, to specify, in short, to negate the negation of time. "The altogether abstract concept" is therefore "the negation of the negation as the true affirmation."46 Its function is to oppose and overcome the negativity of time. For this reason Hegel emphasizes that the concept is the "power of time," and time has the concept as *"its* power."47 Spirit always appears in time "of necessity"48 and time would be the power-dominating spirit if its truth; its concept, could not gain self-identity so as to conquer the ravages of time. For that reason, Hegel continues, spirit "appears in time so long as it [the concept] does not *grasp* its pure concept, that is, so long as it does not vanquish time."49 Time "is the *externally* viewed self which is *not grasped* by the self; time is only the intuited [*anges-chaute*] concept. [But] when the concept grasps itself, it overcomes [*hebt auf*] its temporal form."50 The temporal negativity of time can be overcome in that this purely "external" form of self grasps itself and returns into its inner essence. That grasping is the concept's grasping of itself. "The whole development of the spirit is nothing but its self-elevation into its truth."51 Time wishes to repress and vanquish (*tilgen*) that elevating motion. The temporal negativity of time, which levels off and generalizes everything, is therefore of necessity opposed to the internalization of this "external form." That internalization is the regressive movement with which the concept, truth, idea, and spirit grasp themselves.

Hegel sees that self-specification and identification of the concept of freedom in its dialectical struggle with time taking place in the French Revolution. The principles of freedom and subjectivity must become historical or they do not become real at all. "I," that is, subject and freedom, "is in time, and time is the being of the subject itself."52 Rousseau had had essentially the correct idea with his thought that free will and free expression of self must be general rights. But by itself this thought was just as abstract as the pure subjectivity of the Kantian transcendental unity of apperception. By itself this attempt to realize historically the concept of the

concept had to become the "*fury* of disappearance," the "purely *negative doing.*"[53] The self-identification of the concept in the French Revolution is clearly expressed by Hegel:

> In order that the general arrives at a deed it must gather itself together into the One of the Individuality and it must place a single self-consciousness at its head. For the general will is only in one self which is One, *real* will. But therewith *all*

other single individuals are excluded from the *whole* of this deed and they have only a limited part in it so that it is not the deed of the *real general* self-consciousness.'

54

The right proclaimed by the French Revolution remained abstract because it was not subjectively appropriated by all individuals. France had not experienced the subjectivity-universalizing Reformation. "Right" remained a "general" property, but only abstractly. Only a very small number, in fact, ultimately "One," Robespierre, hoped strategically to realize for all that freedom which had been proclaimed as the new world-historical principle. But strategic institutionalization is a far cry from subjective realization by all private individuals. For that reason Hegel criticizes the "abstract" nature of the "concept" of freedom as it was instituted by the French Revolution. This abstractness is the "horror of absolute freedom," a mere "cold generality," the pure death, the pure negation "without inner circumferance," that is, "without fulfillment, the unfulfilled point of the absolutely free subject."[55] "It is the coldest, most flat death, without greater significance than the slashing through a head of cabbage or swallowing a bit of water."[56]

In our analysis of the dialectic of time and concept we can then observe the following: the Rousseauan general will was indeed historically realized by the French Revolution. The concept of freedom and subjectivity came in time historically to the front, the concept attempted to grasp itself. But because the concept of freedom and subjectivity was not realized by all, but rather only gained institutional form in the "One," this concept of freedom remained abstract and unhistorical. However, the Kantian transcendental subject, moving beyond the "highest good," "virtue," or "pleasure," provided the ground for the subjective appropriation of that principle *by all.* To be sure, by itself this principle also remained abstract and a mere postulate. Hegel advances beyond Kant: his insight into the principle I=I as the transcendental foundation of all knowledge and freedom is interpreted in terms of the events of the French Revolution. Likewise, the events of the French Revolution are interpreted in terms of the fifth thesis of Kant's essay of 1784, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*: "The greatest problem of the human species, a problem which nature forces

him to resolve, is the formation of a civil society which administers the right universally."[57] But, whereas for Kant freedom had remained merely an empty, unhistorical postulate, it became in Hegel's dialectic of time and the concept, historically real. And, whereas in Rousseau and the French Revolution freedom had remained an empty generality, abstracting from all truly subjective freedom, it gained in Hegel's interpretation specificity and

concretion. Hegel criticizes the emptiness of Kant's mere postulate as well as the "unhistorical historicity" of the Rousseauan general will: "Both were not able to send any part into the middle by means of which mediation could be accomplished, for they remained inseparably absolute for themselves."

58 But in the Hegelian mediation of the two principles, the real "work" of the concept of freedom could "grasp" its own substance and essence. Hegel's understanding of the state is that "grasping" of the concept of the concept. In the state, the concept of freedom, truth, the idea, reflects itself. But that reflection is simultaneously historical reality, which it was neither for Kant nor for Rousseau or for the French Revolution.59 In that reflection, the true nature of the spirit returns regressively into itself, grasping its real nature, and this grasping of its nature is the progress of the concept of freedom in history: "Reason recognizes that which is true, which is in and for itself, that which has no limits. The concept of the spirit is return into itself. In this movement spirit makes itself its own object. In this way progress does not proceed into infinity. There is rather purpose, namely, the turn into itself."60 Simultaneously, the limiting, negating erosion of time is halted with the cultural "work" accomplished by the historical realization of the concept of the concept in the state. Hegel specifically stresses that the truth, the idea, spirit are *eternal.* But in the cultural work of the conceptual realization of this eternal truth, it descends into time, effectively opposing the culture-negating ravages of the negativity of time. Time and eternity, history and the concept thus meet but do so dialectically: the disquieting unrest and tension between the concept's attempt to grasp itself in terms of, but also contrary to, the conditions of time and history will never be overcome.

Has freedom, the "substance of the spirit"61 then come to rest in its complete self-identification in the state? The specification of freedom in the state, guaranteeing right and property, is not at all the end of the disclosure of the substance of history. The dialectic does not cease: just as certainly as the state has always been the purpose and end of history, so it is also the beginning of history. Hegel says specifically that the freedom guaranteed in

the state exists only "since yesterday."[62] This idea could suggest that Hegel's outline of the general idea of the state, in the last portion of the *Philosophy of Right,* is only the introduction to the historical specification of this idea in the real interchange among the many states. This future orientation, in which "the state" is not the end but the beginning of history, is further accentuated by Hegel's specific rejection of the spirit of the restoration as an insipid product of his time.[63] With these observations we are in a position to investigate the systematic significance of the relation of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* to the *Philosophy of*

Right. That significance rests in nothing less than the suggestion of history as a new principle of practical philosophy: the general idea of the state descends out of its abstract position to the historical specificity of the interaction of the many states.

History: Hegel's Principle of Practical Philosophy in the Modern World

Paragraphs 341-60 of Hegels' *Philosophy of Right* deal, as does the final portion of the last chapter of the book, with "The State." Those last paragraphs carry the title "World History" and represent the transition to Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* begun in 1822. What is the systematic point of the relation of "world history" to "the state?" This question can be answered in the following way.

The natural law theory of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau moved from a fictitious state of nature to civil society. The state of the natural law tradition, resulting from that movement, had something fictitious and artificial about it: Hegel repeatedly criticized the "mere accumulation" of voices and wealth and goods, the mere quantitative adding of voices to a consensus,

64 as not identical with the "right," as blind, because lacking necessity and truth, in short, being and substance. For this reason both this understanding of the state and of nature are for Hegel "abstract" and unhistorical. Whereas the state of natural law theory is immobilized by its fictitious natural originthe alternative in most of those states based on this tradition is either more of a necessary evil, or less of it, either more state administration of public affairs or less, but the state is seen in any case as a restriction of privacy and individuality and freedom65 the real, because conceptual, nature of Hegel's state and civil society becomes the historical origin of free interaction: (1) The state specifies itself in terms of the dignity of private property, of private and individual fights, etc.: only if they have specified and determined themselves in the state, have they left behind their willful and arbitrary abstraction. But that means that the state must promote a healthy, that is, "historical" interchange of individuals. But the state is (2) also the historical origin of the free interchange between the "many states."66 For the point of the *Philosophy of Right* had been to delineate and

unfold the nature of the state. But that purpose is achieved only if the general idea of the state relates not only to civil society and to family. The full nature of the state becomes apparent onlyand here lies the systematic point of the relation of the philosophy of the state to the philosophy of historywhen the general idea of the state becomes historically specific in the interaction between the “many states.” That interaction itself is historical openness, a dialogue of freedom. Hegel releases the general idea of the state into the freedom and chanciness of the interaction

of the many states. It was Hegel's goal in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* to show how that progression toward freedom characterizes the very nature of history in its totality.

It is imperative to characterize Hegel's critique of natural law in greater detail. The relation of Hegel's philosophy of history to his philosophy of the state has its point in this critique. The natural law tradition from Hobbes to Rousseau conceived the state as an artifact, created by man. It is an automaton (and for that reason rigid and, ultimately, immobile): "For by art is created that great *Leviathan,* called a *Commonwealth* or state, in latin civitas."

67 This means nothing else but that the state is conceived as a geometrically designed automaton. The Leviathan is a "body politic," a technical machine. As man had learned by science and the machine to dominate nature, so by those same means now also the social organism is to be geometrically regulated. For Aristotle, the state existed by nature, and political action was understood as *eu prattein,* "good action," "good" conforming to man's natural sociability. But Hobbes needed to surrender this ontological foundation68 because he believed that practical, free human interaction could not be trusted. Hobbes, and with him the whole natural law tradition, surrendered the tradition of practical philosophy going back to Aristotle. Free political action is no longer trusted in the context of the natural law conception of the state as a geometric automaton because the conditions of such action are not (contractually) produced by men, but rather naturally given. Only such strategic action is henceforth considered trustworthy which conforms to the rules technically devised by "imitating" God's own artifact, nature, in the creation of the "artificial animal," the Leviathan, the Commonwealth. God himself is the great geometer. He himself has artfully created nature, that great artifact. Nature, in turn, has poietically produced "the *art* of man."69 Man, this artifact, nature's own robot, must imitate nature by artificially producing the state. The free, virtuous "good action" of Aristotelian politics is here surrendered, for poietic production, technical manipulation, the geometric artifact have greater dignity, trustworthiness, and rationality over against free political praxis, naturally given institutions, or the free interplay of historical

interaction. That greater dignity derives from the fact that it is poietically produced and hence under control, not subject to arbitrary, historical interaction. Manfred Riedel formulated paradoxically this transition from traditional political action to the model of strategic manipulation of natural law: “The only political act which this ‘new science’ knowsthe constitution of political reason in the original union of the citizens (*unio civilis*)is simultaneously that act in which rational independence of political action vanishes.”[70]

Over against this model the transition of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*

to his philosophy of history has its significance. Hegel's state is ontologically grounded in its own "nature" which, as we have seen, is so different because it is concrete, historicalfrom the "artificial," abstract, and contrived nature of the natural law tradition. Hegel's state is ontologically grounded in the nature of the spirit and freedom. Insofar as history is the necessary progress in the consciousness of freedom, the general idea of the state of necessity must historically lead back to its origin: to the free, "playful" interchange among the "many states." As Hegel had conceived the statefollowing Pufendorf

71 as that historical authority which stands over against civil society, legitimating the various, divergent and accidental tendencies within it, so the general idea of the state itself must give way to the interaction of the many states in the "play of history."72 The ontological priority of history over against civil society and the state, in Hegel, amounts to nothing less than that Hegel establishes "above the stateas a new authority or practical philosophythat *history* in which 'the civil whole and the independence of the state is exposed to accidence,'"73 : the accidence of free interchange among individual states. Hegel envisions a world culture governed by historical openness to the "other," an openness entailing great risk but also great rewards. Hegel conceives a historical foundation of free social and political praxis. It was precisely that risk which the natural law theory from Hobbes to Rousseau hoped to stabilize, that is, eliminate, with the manageable and controllable contract. According to Riedel:

> That history which Hegel introduces at the end of his *Philosophy of Right* is the reality of that idea of the state of nature, which the natural law theorists from Hobbes to Rousseau have placed at the beginning of their system. That movement which runs in them from the state of nature to the civil society in the identity with which the state comes to its immobility, begins with Hegel at that point when the state relates no longer to the civil society, but rather to *other states*.74

This transition from the general idea of the state to the historical interplay of states is the transition of the state to its genuine nature and purpose. This nature, however, has reality in distinction to the fictitious and artificial "nature" of the natural law theorists. With this transition, the idea of the state returns to history as its natural origin.

It is, in conclusion, perhaps not insignificant to pick up a point from the beginning of our investigation into the ideas of progress and history in relation to the thought-system dominating cultures both East and West. A sign of the fictitious state of nature lying behind the contract notion is the rigidity and immobility of the artifact of the state. Its external props are military might to protect the civil and

industrial integrity of the body politic. Indeed, it needs protection, for it is weak at heart. In the contemporary world, where atomic weapons have become the means of such protection, this model has become suicidal. It appears that Hegel's philosophy of history, emphasizing the free interchange of independent states, can be of significance in the no longer luxurious attempts to surmount the suicidal rigidities of international confrontation politics.

Notes

1. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte,* ed. J. Hoffmeister, 5th ed., vol. 1, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte,* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968), pp. 244-57 (hereafter cited as *ViG*). See also G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts.* ed. J. Hoffmeister, 4th ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1955), pars. 354-8, pp. 294-6 (hereafter cited as *RPh*). See W. Jaeschke, *Die Suche nach den eschatologischen Wurzeln der Geschichtsphilosophie.* Eine historische Kritik der Säkularisierungsthese. (Munich: Christian Kaiser), 1976, pp. 298f (hereafter cited as *Säk*). See also Peter Cornehl, *Die Zukunft der Versöhnung.* Eschatologie und Emanzipation in der Aufklärung, bei Hegel und in der Hegelschen Schule. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) p. 146 (hereafter cited as Z).

2. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Die Abenteuer der Dialektik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974) p. 44.

3. M. Riedel, "Fortschritt und Dialektik in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie." in *Hegel in der Sicht der Neueren Forschung,* I. Fetscher ed, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973) pp. 387-407, pp. 389f, (hereafter cited as *Fortschritt*).

4. F. Engels, "Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der Klassischen Deutschen Philosophie", in *Marx-Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1972) 21:296 (hereafter cited as *MEW*).

5. Ibid. p. 296.

6. Ibid. p. 297.

7. *ViG,* p. 63.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Systemfragment* of 1800, in Hegel, *Werke in Zwanzig Bänden,* ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag) vol. 1, *Frühschriften,* p. 422 (hereafter cited as *Werke*). See D. Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971), pp. 27f (hereafter cited as *HiK*).

9. *ViG,* p. 180. See *RPh*, par. 343; *Zusatz,* pp. 289f.

10. *ViG,* pp. 149f.

11. I. Kant, *Mutmasslicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786) in I. Kant, *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1965), p. 78, (hereafter quoted as *Anfang*).

12. Ibid. p. 79.

13. *ViG,* p. 181.

14. Ibid.

15. *ViG,* p. 116; see also *RPh* pars. 29, 75, 100.

16. *ViG,* p. 116.

17. Ibid, p. 118.

18. Ibid, pp. 177ff, 180. See also Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes,* 6th ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1952), pp. 521-4, 558 (hereafter cited as *Phän*). See Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion,* ed. G. Lasson (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1966), vol. 1, *Begriff der Religion* (hereafter cited as *BR*); vol. 2, Die Naturreligion, pp. 121-7; vol 3, *Die Religion der Geistigen Individualität,* (hereafter cited as RgI); vol 4, *Die Absolute Religion* (hereafter cited as *AR*).

19. *ViG,* p. 118.

20. *ViG,* p. 118; regarding "lawlessness", p. 245.

21. *ViG,* p. 176.

22. See *ViG,* p. 50. It is *man's* work to produce the "kingdom of the spirit." (It is this point that Walter Jaeschke presses against the theological appropriation of Hegel, most recently in *Die Religionsphilosophie Hegels* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983). But it is also true that this production is the work of the "mature spirit, which is concerned to grasp itself in the concept and to free itself in the present." *RPh,* p. 17. It is characteristic that Hegel does not see human and the "spirit's" agency as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary.

23. *ViG,* p. 181.

24. *ViG,* p. 163.

25. *ViG,* p. 245.

26. *ViG,* p. 177.

27. Ibid.

28. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte,* vol. 4, *Die Germanische Welt,* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1968) p. 926 (hereafter cited as GW).

29. G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Enzyklopädie der Philosophischen Wissenschaften,* ed. F. Nicolin, and O. Pöggeler, (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1969) par. 258, (hereafter cited as *Enz*); *Zusatz,* pp. 209f; *ViG,* pp. 176-81.

30. *Enz,* par. 258, p. 210.

31. *Phän,* p. 558.

32. Riedel, *Fortschritt,* p. 400.

33. *RPh,* p. 17.

34. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* 3 vols, in *Werke*, vols. 13-15 (Quote from *Ästhetik,* vol. 2, *Werke*, 14:54.)

35. Ibid.

36. *Enz.* par. 258, p. 209.

37. *Enz.* par. 258, *Zusatz,* p. 209.

38. *Enz.* par. 258, *Zusatz,* p. 209.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., p. 210.

41. Ibid., p. 210.

42. Ibid., p. 209.

43. *Enz.* par. 258, p. 210. See *Ästhetik,* vol. 3, *Werke,* 15: p. 156.

44. *Enz,* p. 258, p. 210.

45. *Enz,* par. 553, p. 440. The *concept* of the Spirit has its *reality* in the Spirit.

See M. Theunissen on this in *Hegels Lehre vom Absoluten Geist als Theologisch-Politischer Traktat,* (Berlin: deGruyter Verlag, 1970) pp. 103ff, 118ff (hereafter cited as *HL*).<End Popup Text>

46. G. W. F. Hegel, review of *Solgers Nachgelassene Schriften und Briefwechsel* in *Jahrbücher für Wissenschaftliche Kritik* (1828, 51/52), reprint in *Werke,* vol. 11, *Berliner Schriften,* pp. 205-274 (quote from p. 238).

47. *Enz,* par. 258, p. 210.

48. *Phän,* p. 558.

49. *Phän,* p. 558.

50. *Phän,* p. 558.

51. *Enz,* par. 379; *Zusatz,* in *Werke,* vol. 10:15.

52. *Ästhetik,* vol. 3, *Werke* 15: p. 156.

53. *Phän,* p. 418.

54. Ibid.

55. Ibid.

56. *Phän,* p. 418f.

57. Kant, *Ausgewählte Kleine Schriften,* pp. 27-44; see p. 33, thesis 5.

58. *Phän,* p. 418.

59. Riedel, *Fortschritt,* pp. 400f.

60. *ViG,* p. 181.

61. *ViG,* p. 55.

62. *RPh,* par. 62; *Zusatz,* p. 70.

63. *GW,* p. 840.

64. See, *e.g. ViG,* p. 150. The basic philosophical problem in the mere

quantitative accumulation of data Hegel discusses in *Enz,* pars. 39, 47, 50, pp. 66-77. Especially on our issue of the addition of voices to the contract or consensus, see *RPh,* par. 75, p. 80. Hegel sees a common ground in the arbitrary expression of will of feudal *and also of modern* consensus authority. But even though both types of authority are "arbitrary" and "willful" (*willk-ürlich*), the willfulness of feudal authority originates in the patriarchal tradition, whereas the willfulness of the consensus derives from the problem of mere addition and accumulation of voices into a restrictive contract, of voices that are "free" in the "fictitious" state of nature. K. H. Ilting rightly qualifies this "state of nature" as "fictitious": "The Structure of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'" in *Hegel's Political Philosophy: Problems and Perspectives,* ed. Z. A. Pelczynski, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 90-110. For the "fiction of a state of nature," see p. 91. On the consensus-accumulation-addition issue, which lies behind the contract thesis, see p. 94: "According to Hegel, it is not possible rationally to interpret the state as a contract of autonomous individuals," i.e., of individuals who are autonomous prior to the contract, in the fictitious state of nature. This contract-and consensus-theory "is ultimately based on the arbitrary decisions of individuals" (ibid). "On this theory the state confronts the citizens as something alien to them in which they do not really participate" (ibid., p. 95) For Hegel's critique of the contract theme, see *RPh,* pars. 29, 75, 100, 258. From the position of his "Transcendental Community of Communication", Karl Otto Apel has today similarly criticized both contract and consensus, as well as convention. See, *e.g.* K. O. Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie,* vol. 2, *Das Apriori der*

Kommunikationsgemeinschaft (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1976), pp. 374ff, 416ff, 418. See also K. O. Apel, "The Apriori of Communication and the Foundation of the Humanities" *Man and World* 5(1) 1972: 3-27, esp. p. 29.

65. Henry Paolucci's attempt to identify the American political state as envisioned by the founding fathers with what Hegel had in mind (see his article, "Hegel and the Nation-State System of International Relations" in *Hegel's Social and Political Thought,* ed. D. Ph. Verene, (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980) pp. 150-66) cannot be considered successful. Hegel criticized the contract, the fictitious origin of "nature" and the atomistic, "wild," "lawless" authority of the individuals making the contract and deriving their freedom (i.e. willfulness) to do so from that nature. Such a mere "accumulation" of authority leaves out completely any question of the truth of the whole, of the state, and of what ought to be done. This "ought," this "essence" and "nature" of man stood always, for Hegel, in sharp contrast to what all merely agree upon by consensus. Joseph Flay's comment (*Hegel's Social and Political Thought,* ed. D. Ph. Verene, pp. 167ff) is therefore essentially correct.

66. *RPh,* par. 340.

67. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil,* ed. M. Oakeshott, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, (1651) no date (1948)), p. 5.

68. M. Riedel, *Metaphysik und Metapolitik.* Studien zu Aristoteles und zur Politischen Sprache der Neuzeitlichen Philosophie (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975) pp. 174-9 (hereafter cited as *MM*).

69. T. Hobbes, *Leviathan,* p. 5; see also T. Hobbes, *Leviathan,* p. 109, where the author says that by "the laws of nature… every man will, and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art", the "laws of nature" being specifically understood as those operative outside of community or society.

70. *MM*, 177, see also p. 99.

71. See M. Riedel, "Gesellschaft, bürgerliche", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie,* vol. 3, (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft,

1974), pp. 466-73; see also, idem, “Hegels Begriff der Bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und das Problem seines Geschichtlichen Ursprungs”, in *Materialien zu Hegels Recht-sphilosophie,* ed. M. Riedel, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975) pp. 247-74.

72. Riedel, *Fortschritt,* p. 404.

73. *RPh,* par. 340, p. 288; see also Riedel, *Fortschritt,* 404.

74. Riedel, *Fortschritt,* 404f.

Comment, by Joseph C. Flay

Rolf Ahlers has here given us a paper that focuses on a central problem of "practical philosophy," as that term has recently been understood by Manfred Riedel and others.

1 Riedel describes the nature of practical philosophy in the following way:

> 'Practical philosophy' designates a special philosophical program and a specific scientific and socio-historical situation. It is a matter of recovering a dimension of questioning and argumentation which, until the beginning of the nineteenth century and under the principal concept of 'practical philosophy', constitutes a stable and continuing component of philosophical theory. It has as a task the grounding of the validity of norms of human action ("what we ought to do") as well as the weighing and choosing of the goals of action ("how we may live").2

The movement consists, then, of an attempt to literally rehabilitate a part of philosophy that, it is felt, has atrophied, and to do so "under the considerably changed conditions of modern industrial society and the forms of activity and consciousness belonging to it…."3 I mention this project in philosophy because it is important to see Ahlers' task in this paper not as an attempt simply to analyse and interpret Hegel's notion of history in respect to the state, but as well to enlist Hegel's analysis in the cause of practical philosophy.

Ahlers has taken up in general three questions: (a) the question of the nature of the state according to Hegel, and of the difference between Hegel's conception and that of those thinkers who have preceded and succeeded him; (b) the question of the nature of history

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and of its relation to the state, according to Hegel, and the difference between this conception and that linear conception which informs both Marxist and liberal-democratic-capitalist thought and action; and (c) the question of the significance of the Hegelian teaching on the state and history for concrete praxis today.

Concerning the first topic, that of the nature of the state *per se*, I really have nothing to say except that I agree. The interpretation of Hegel as a reactionary or as a "stone-walling conservative" must be rejected, and our view of Hegel's political theory must be regulated by a focus on the state as *fundamentally* the constitution. As constitution, the state is not in existence for the sake of repressive regulation of individual and group actions, nor simply to orchestrate a "free market economy," but rather as the ground for actual self-realization of all in society. Furthermore, I agree that this is, historically considered, the actual present idea of the state, however ill or well it is realized in any instance, and however varied the interpretation of "constitution" might be.

On Ahlers's second topic, that of the nature of history and of its relation to individual states, I also find little to say in a negatively critical way. If we are to understand Hegel rightly, we must understand him systematically. It is simply a systematic fact that the state is not only the constitution, pointing backwards or downwards to civil society and the individual, but is

> also the historical origin of the free interchange between the "many states"…. The full nature of the state becomes apparent onlyand here lies the systematic point of the relation of the philosophy of the state to the philosophy of historywhen the general idea of the state becomes historically specific in the interaction between the "many states." That interaction itself is historical openness, a dialogue of freedom. Hegel releases the general idea of the state into the freedom and chanciness of the interaction of the many states (p. 160).

Anyone who does not take into consideration the systematic place of the *Philosophy of Right* in the system as a whole, badly misses Hegel's authentic view. This is what it really means to claim that history, in the end, is the concrete judgment on the state. On this analysis, the sovereignty of any modern nation-state remains inviolate, but is also thrown into the openness of history, into the speculative-dialectical concrete existence of absolute spirit. The state is not the end of history, but the beginning. "The

general idea of the state descends out of its abstract position to the historical specificity of the interaction of the many states" (p. 160).

Ahlers's view of Hegel's theory of history in itself is also, I think,

a very fruitful one. For Hegel, there is no linear, progressivist history, and this is, as Ahlers so well shows, contrary to both liberal and Marxist theories of history, which latter fall together into a relatively mechanistic conception of history. Ahlers's critiques of modem natural law theory and of various forms of Marxist theory hit the mark.

But if we are to understand not only a negative, but also the positive thrust of Ahlers's remarks as they link up with the goals of practical philosophy, we must be aware of his position in some earlier essays, namely in "Endlichkeit und absoluter Geist in Hegels Philosophie,"

[4] and in "The Overcoming of Critical Theory in the Hegelian Unity of Theory and Praxis,"[5] in which he develops a position close in its basic notion to that of Michael Theunissen insofar as Ahlers holds an explicitly religious/trinitarian conception of spirit, and views its dynamic, historical nature as that of an "archaeological eschatology."[6] This latter notion involves a view of spirit which rejects "radical eschatology," that is, an eschaton to be reached in such a way that the past which constitutes the journey to the eschaton is laid aside at the end and is of no account, but rather which, contrary to such a view, understands the telos of the historical process to be a self-revelation of spirit in time, which is also a self-grasping and self-grounding of spirit. The paradigm and foundation for this bringing of its own past to revelation, thereby granting the telos itself, is the historical life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the descent and spread of the holy spirit in and through individual human beings existing within a community.

Such a view, in its general outline, has been shared by others, most recently perhaps by Merold Westphal in his *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology.*[7] But, whereas Theunissen and Westphal have been critical of Hegelthe former on the grounds that, contrary to the truth of the Christian teaching, Hegel, in order to present us with the fulfillment of the kingdom of God here on earth, gives the state ultimate and arbitrary power which exceeds even that of God; the latter on the grounds that the kingdom of God has not in fact appeared in historyAhlers attempts here to give a positive judgment on the Hegelian project. In doing so, he links together in

an interesting way the analyses of Theunissen and Westphal, on the one hand, and the project of practical philosophy. It is this which is at the same time most problematic about Ahlers's view, and yet the most pregnant with possibilities.

For Ahlers, if I understand him correctly, if we put the Christian-trinitarian/Hegelian view of spirit together with the Hegelian view of the state in respect to history and to the interaction of states, we find a vision of the human condition in its full historical concreteness that indicates an interaction between states and within history analogous

to the interaction within a community of conscientious actors. That is to say, the stateand each individual stateis that constitution which makes possible the realization of individuals respectively belonging to that particular nation-state. All states, for that reason, recognize as the proper foundation for society such an internal self-realization process. Thus, each state must also recognize the attempt of each other state to actualize the idea of the state, no matter how and to what degree differences might emerge. In this way, we have a structure analogous to that of the disagreement between different, conscientiously acting individuals, all of whom appeal to and recognize the validity of conscience. The nation-states, like the individuals, are thrown into the free interaction across the ground laid by, respectively, the ideas of the state and conscience. This is in stark contrast to the warring postures that derive from the various radical eschatologies, each of which holds a specific interpretation of 'freedom', 'self-realization', and 'the eschaton', and each of which makes a consequent condemnation of all other interpretations of these elements. When this latter view is in force in history, as it now is, there is a tyrannical move on the part of each party to make simply positive the meaning and outcome of the historical struggle for self-realization. But Hegel, on Ahlers's view, totally rejects such a simple positivism, and conceives of history as in *eternal* tension:

> Time and eternity, history and the concept thus meet but do so dialectically: the disquieting unrest and tension between the concept's attempt to grasp itself in terms of, but also contrary to, the conditions of time and history will never be overcome (p. 159).

And, further:

> The ontological priority of history over against civil society and the state amounts to nothing less than that Hegel establishes "above the stateas a new authority of practical philosophythat history in which "the civil whole and the independence of the state is exposed to accidence": the accidence of free interchange among individual states (p. 162).
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> 8

States, like conscientious individuals, are finite at this point and are "condemned" to work out the concrete realization of spirit. As the ultimate paradigm, the holy spirit, does not simply divinize us individually and remove us from our condition of finitude and thus of sin, but rather concretely places that finitude in its authentic relation to infinitude, so also

spirit in history, as the realization of the concept, does not efface finitude and tension, in Hegel's view. Salvation on

the level of history and absolute spirit is structurally analogous to salvation on the level of the individual.

Such a view seems to me to be fundamentally sound, not only as an interpretation of Hegel, but of reality as well. No amount of citation from the *Philosophy of Right* or from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* in an attempt to show the impossibility of this interpretation will suffice; for systematically, the ground for those works is to be found only in the sciences of absolute spirit. And in those terms, neither the descent of the holy spirit nor the dialectic gives anything but promise of the possibility of final reconciliation. There is no guarantee in either the religious or the philosophical doctrine. Hell still exists. The particular kind of future orientation that Ahlers has pointed to here is certainly in Hegel. This is why Ahlers's view is the most pregnant with possibilities; for it is a view that can account for the still present rigidity of the understanding found in the variety of radical eschatologies, and at the same time give us a rational grasp, that is, a comprehension, through reason, of the true nature of international and historical interactions between nation-states. It gives a meaning to "the end of history" that does not reduce Hegel to a silly millenarian.

But it is also precisely here that the problems and the dangers lie; for, given the intentions of practical philosophy, just what is the significance of all of this for praxis? Am I told by that knowledge, or are the leaders of states told by that knowledge, what ought to be done? There are surely easy answers to this question on one level, that is, if one does not care about violating Hegelian principles. But if philosophy is not to tell us what ought to be, but rather only what is, and if we have the norm-testing and goal-testing ends of practical philosophy, and if we are, in Ahlers's terms, to attempt to do something about the way nations confront each other in the world today, I don't see how, in light of all these things, a debilitating contradiction is to be avoided. I am not maintaining that we do not have here an authentic vision of the real state of affairs and of the true speculative meaning of the tensions and negativity in international relations. I am in fact granting that it is very likely that Hegel has given us this. But what I am also taught by that philosophy is that I as an individual and we together act not simply on the

level of history but as finite actors whose unintentional praxis constitutes history; and I am also taught that, even on the level of states, we are cast into the domain of "accidence" or contingency. I as an individual and we as a group together constitute, but do not control, the progress of history; nor are we simple pawns. That is the complex tension and dialectic. What bearing, then, can what we learn here have in respect to being shown

a workable, non-ideological, practical philosophy in which not only individuals but also states may dare to resolve their conflicts historically, that is, without resort to violence? What can I be shown in terms of Hegel's philosophy of history concerning a successful resolution to "the no longer luxurious attempts to surmount the suicidal rigidities of international confrontation politics"? (p. 163) Surely, not only Marxist, but as well the young Hegelian move is closed to us by Ahlers's own analysis; and for the same reasons we are denied any and all proselytizing Christian moves that would make us into radical eschatologists. I have no answer to my question so long as one must remain within the Hegelian framework. But even if I leave that framework, then, although I might posit an ought on the basis of the rational insight Hegel has given me, by my very use of Hegel in this way I have thrown that rational insight into question.

Notes

1. See M. Riedel, ed., *Rehabilitierung der praktischen Philosophie* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 1972).

2. Ibid., p. 11.

3. Ibid.

4. R. Ahlers, "Endlichkeit und absoluter Geist in Hegels Philosophie," *Zeitschrift füt philosophische Forschung* 29 (1975): 63-80.

5. R. Ahlers, "The Overcoming of Critical Theory in the Hegelian Unity of Theory and Praxis," *Clio* 8 (1978): 71-96.

6. See Michael Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist als theologischpolitischen Traktat* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1970).

7. M. Westphal, *History and Truth in Hegel's Phenomenology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979).

8. Ahlers is here quoting from Manfred Riedel: "Fortschritt und Dialektik in Hegels Geschichtsphilosophie," in *Hegel in der Sicht der neueren Forschung,* ed. I. Fetscher (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1973), p. 404. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* Section 340.

Chapter Eight
Hegel, Art, and History

William Desmond

As is well known, Hegel is frequently credited with being one of the first of thinkers to acknowledge the crucial importance of history, not only for philosophy itself, but for all areas of human significance. Often, however, Hegel's concern with history tends to be restricted by commentators to political issues, or to the problems encountered by the historical scholar in his discipline.

1 As a consequence, that controversial issue in Hegelian thought, namely, the end of history, is often treated in conjunction with, for instance, some of Hegel's startling assertions about the state's being the divine Idea as it exists on earth.2 Of course, the precise issue of the end of history continues to be controversial, and Hegel's own words here are not devoid of ambiguity. Yet I think it fair to say that discussion of Hegel's view of history tends to remain on the level of what for him is objective spirit: the world of political power and social institutions and their development through time.

While no discussion of history can avoid considerations of objective spirit, my purpose here is to follow a suggestion that we cease confining the problems of history exclusively to this level. For Hegel, the matter can be handled adequately only if we are willing to consider how history appears in relation to Absolute Spirit.3 It is true that Hegel's treatment of history is generally recognized to be incomplete without reference to the importance of religion. Marx was one of the first in a line when he spoke of religion as revealing the secret history of a people. This claim, in fact, is only a restatement of Hegel's own view as expressed in the *Encyclopedia* when he says, "…the history of religions coincides with world history."4 Of course, in Marx we find the above-remarked tendency to treat of history in terms of ob-

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jective spiritin his case, this implies the reduction of the significance of religion to social and economic processes. Nevertheless, it remains true that the relation of history and religion has received some genuine attention by Hegel's commentators, even by those not sympathetic to religion.

What has not received similar attention is the relation of history and art. Adapting the remark of Marx, I would like to suggest that art, too, reveals a secret history for Hegel, one that is not altogether explicable in terms of objective spirit. After all, for Hegel, art does constitute one of three terms that, along with religion and philosophy, make up the realm of Absolute Spirit. Given this, it may be of use to pursue some reflections on the relation of art and history that, I hope, may throw some light on that tangled issue of the end of history.

My intention here is not merely to isolate some particular passage in Hegel and to subject this to detailed exegesis. The relation of art and history is defined for Hegel by the precise place of art in his system as a whole, and we require reflection on this place. Hegel himself points to art as itself a historical phenomenon when he details the phases of its development in terms of symbolical, classical, and romanticist art.

5 My attention is not primarily on the historical development of art in this sense. Rather I am concerned with the manner in which art might provide man with the sense of an end, and how this sense of an end might relate to the question of the end of history.

In Hegel, the relation of art and history is further complicated by the fact that many commentators have tended to accept too easily the view that art for us moderns is a thing of the past. That is, they invest the so-called death of art with something of the character of an historical inevitability. This issue is too large to dwell on here. I have made some remarks on it elsewhere.6 Suffice it to say that the concept of "death" in Hegel need not be construed univocally. It must be thought of dialectically, that is, as containing the possibility of its own contrary, which in this case implies its containing the possibility of "rebirth." If, for the dialectical thinker, there is a "death" of art, we must expect such a "death" to be internally complex,

that is, as also allowing for the possible continuation and repeated rebirth of art.

Let me now give more precise focus to my intentions by recalling Aristotle's famous assertion; poetry is more philosophical than history.[7] Poetry is more philosophical than is history because it discloses a universal import that is purified of trivial inessentials. Because history is cluttered with contingencies, there remains always a side to it that tends to fall short of full intelligibility. Poetry gives birth to something less contingent for Aristotle, something essential and necessary. My suggestion is that Hegel's view of art here displays a strong kinship with that of Aristotle. Art, for Hegel, delivers man close to full

intelligibility and for this reason is assigned a place in Absolute Spirit. The issue, I add, is not however a matter of pitting art against history in terms of rival claims of belonging to Absolute Spirit. Nor is it a question of simply substituting an artistic fiction for an historical narrative of fact, nor of depreciating the importance of accurate historiography. On the contrary, I suggest that, for Hegel, art involves an imaginative effort to gather up from history an essential meaning. It is not opposed to history. Rather, it is one of man's central ways of appropriating the significance of his own history, in a matter uncluttered by distracting contingencies and in a manner that allows him to contemplate his own character, that is, in a manner that affords him some self-knowledge. Art is not anti-historical or a-historical. It is, rather, an imaginative appropriation of the essential strivings of historical man.

To develop this view further it is necessary for us to examine some of the characteristics of art, or rather of the art work, which make it such an imaginative appropriation. The characteristics of the art work most relevant to the theme of history are its uniting of spirit and sensuousness, its dialectical wholeness, its unification of freedom and necessity and of individuality and universality, and most especially its being marked by an intrinsic end. Let us now look at these.

The chief characteristic of the art work, for Hegel, is that it is the concrete, sensuous presentation of spirit, of *Geist.* What does this mean? It means that, though the art work may present itself as a material object, it is not exhausted by its sheer materiality. The art work is not just a simple empirical "this." Instead, its concreteness indicates a richer, less bare existence. The external aspect of the art work is not identical with the art work in its fullness, for this fullness is only intelligible by reference to *Geist.* For the art work, let us say a sculpture, is a material existence already worked on by human activity. So its presence contains the mediation of spiritual activity. Even as a material object, the art work reveals and expresses concrete spirit as creative in man. When Hegel speaks of the beauty of art as a beauty higher than nature, that is, as a beauty born again, reborn of spirit, it is just this point that is at stake.

In addition to this unavoidable reference to spiritual activity, the art work also gives form to this activity. The art work articulates human activity in order to guard it from fragmentation and dissipation. In other words, the art work gathers together human activity into a unity or a whole. The true is the whole, Hegel held. Part of the truth of the art work is just this, its wholeness. Moreover, this gathering of activity is not blandly done, as it were. It is performed against the grain of opposition. Struggle always enters into the creation of the art work. If. the art work is a whole, it is one that incor-

porates some reminder, some recapitulation of the pathway of its own struggle with opposition. For this reason we might say that the type of wholeness the art work exhibits is dynamic, dialectical wholeness. The art work is not a simple, univocal unity, but an internally intricate unity, held together despite the opposing strains it seeks to accommodate.

9

The most noticeable dialectical character of the art work, for Hegel, is revealed in its uniting what often are taken as antagonistic poles, namely, sensuous existence and spiritual significance. Against any dualism of the sensuous and the spiritual, the art work involves the sensuous presentation of spirit, a presentation that is concomitantly a spiritualization of the sensuous.[10] This emphasis on the sensuous and its being informed by spirit, this attention to their conjunction in the art work, might be said to link art and history in this sense. The sensuous realm is the realm of appearance, the realm of time. Now art remains tied to this realm of becoming, but with it sensuousness, appearance, time take on a significance that is more than their bare facticity. The art work shows the sensuous appearance of time to be significant beyond brute facticity. When Hegel speaks of the art work as spiritualizing the sensuous, it is to some such significance that, I think, he points our attention. We might add too that, when he speaks of the sensuous presentation of spirit, he repudiates the opposite extreme. He repudiates that dualism, traditinally ascribed to Platonic thought, which places the significance of time utterly beyond time, in an all but unavailable eternity.[11] Art's conjunction of spirit and sensuousness is the aesthetic version of what, for the religious consciousness, especially the Christian consciousness, is incarnation, or what, for the philosophical mind, is the manifestation in history of Absolute Spirit.

Hegel ascribes this rich sensuousness to art in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* when denying that the mode of appearance of art is a mere deceptive semblance. He puts the point, in fact, in a manner highly reminiscent of Aristotle's view, which we previously noted. He does so in a passage which contrasts art with historical narrative, a passage which, if only for its echo of Aristotle, deserves to be quoted in full. Hegel puts it thus:

Just as little can the representations of art be called a deceptive semblance in comparison with the representations of historical narrative, as if that had the more genuine truth. For history [*die Geschichtsschreibung*] has not even immediate existence, but only the intellectual presentation of it, for the element of its portrayal, and its content remain burdened with the whole mass of contingent matter formed by common reality with its

occurrences, complications and individualities. But the work of art brings before us the eternal powers that hold dominion in history, without any such superfluity in the way of immediate sensuous presentation and its unstable semblances.

12

We can see this exclusion of the superfluous in the way the art work brings to the fore an issue unavoidable in any treatment of historical process, and which figures prominently in Hegel, namely, the interplay of freedom and necessity. The artist, if you like, finds himself subject to the cunning of reason in aesthetic form. For Hegel, the art work is defined by a certain internal necessity. The artist himself indicates this necessity when he speaks of his work's having to be this way and no other. He may tell of his initial freedom either to undertake the work or leave it undone. But he will also tell how, once freely undertaken, it is not simply he who does the work, but rather, the work itself imposes a certain necessity on him. His self-determination determines the work, but in turn the self-determination of the work determines him. In a word, there occurs a dialectical interplay between freedom and necessity. So also the artist may perhaps speak of his *new,* realized freedom in terms of just this dialectical interplay. When he and the work coincide in a complex unison of intention and interplay with the work. Initially, the details of the work seem to be just there, and we may seem free to conjoin them this way or that, whichever way we please. Yet if we dwell with the art work, and if this work is genuine, it comes to crystalize into a whole: the parts fit together and we discern a certain necessity in their cohesion. And since we are now guided by this sense of necessity, we are forced to discard our "old" freedom. But we do not experience this necessity as a mere external constraint. Rather, it comes to us as a liberation, a release: we are freed from the fragmentariness of mere detail and come to be at home in a rich whole. It is not that we discard or obliterate the details, but in standing beyond their fragmentariness we ourselves are freed from fragmentation. Such a "standing beyond," which unites and preserves the internal details of a complex whole, in fact, makes the art work an aesthetic concretion of Hegel's general principle of *Aufhebung.*

Let us note this further important characteristic of the art work that links it

with the theme of history, namely, the manner whereby it joins individuality with universality. Above, we drew attention to Aristotle's assertion of the more philosophical character of poetry, more philosophical because more universal than history. With Hegel, however, we find an emphasis upon the individual character of the art work. The art work does not classify experience according to abstract categories, but thoroughly individualizes it. Hegel's insistence

on this individualizing side of art ties art with history, for history is inextricably bound up with the individual. At the same time Hegel retains the Aristotelian insistence on universality. The individual art work, even as individual, does exhibit its own universality. The art work in this respect is an actuality of great significance for philosophy itself in that it helps us concentrate on individuality without having to exclude universality at the same time. Reflection on the art work, that is, helps us make intelligible Hegel's idea of a concrete universal. History, too, converges on the emergence of such a universality, most especially concentrated in the person of man himself, the most highly individualized of beings in nature. Not surprisingly, the human figure occupies a central position in Hegel's reflection on art.

13 As an illustration of how an art work might present universality, we need only think of the portrait. A portrait is something entirely individual, yet a great artist may sometimes show us a universal face emerging in the particular face. We might think of the later self-portraits of Rembrandt. In these we find a completely individualized face that epitomizes something universal. This individual face is at the same time a universal face, the face of humanity itself, in its suffering, in its sympathy, in its self-knowledge.

But by far the most important characteristic for the issue of art and history is that the art work presents itself with the character of an end. Hegel very strongly draws our attention to this characteristic of art.14 He goes so far as to say that it is by dwelling on this character of art that we pass toward a true conception of art. Consistent with this emphasis, Hegel rejects, for example, those utilitarian theories that evaluate art in terms of its usefulness for practical life. Art is not a means to an end, an instrumental object we exploit for purposes beyond itself. Art is marked by being an end in itself, something that is intrinsically an end. In this sense art frees us from the desires of sensuous appetite. It releases in man a freer, more universal, more contemplative comportment toward things. This understanding of art is anticipated, of course, by Kant's earlier concern with the disinterestedness of art, just as subsequently Schopenhauer was to exploit a similar point

when he spoke of art, especially music, as liberating man from the tyranny of the will.

We enjoy the art work for itself. And we enjoy it for itself because it is not a simple imitation. For an imitation tends to borrow its content from elsewhere, from sources external to itself. The art work, by contrast, is productive of its own content, a content that belongs intimately with the art work itself, not a content parasitical on other things. Moreover, this end character of art causes Hegel to reject moralistic and propagandist theories of art. Art is not fully itself, not fully free, when it is in subservience to interests extraneous to itself,

whether these interests be moral, political, or religious. Indeed, Hegel's insistence on art as marked by its own intrinsic end should make those commentators a little bit more cautious when they say that art, for Hegel, is merely a provisional stepping stone on the way to philosophy. Hegel's rejection of any instrumentalist theory of art makes his position on the relation of art and philosophy far more complex.

But in what sense is art an end? I think it is helpful here to speak of the art work as an end in somewhat Greek terms, terms, indeed, that Hegel incorporates into his entire philosophical outlook, as many commentators have pointed out. The art work is an end in the sense of *telos.* That is, it is the completion of a process of becoming. In this particular case, the art work is an actuality emergent out of the productive power of the artist. The artist's work is originative, dynamic, formative, and his end product always incorporates such dynamic origination within itself. The art work gathers together a process of origination, giving form to an initially amorphous power, actualizing a latent potency. The art work is an end not only as completing a process of origination. More importantly, it is an end as *perfecting* such a process. In that sense, we might say that the great works of art are man's images of perfection.

We might say that at every level of experience and being, the operative presence of some kind of perfection is to be discerned. In Hegel's terms, at every level of experience the Absolute is at work; but not every form of experience *knows* that this is so. With art, as with religion and philosophy, this knowledge emerges and does so to seek progressively more articulate form. So perfection may be pluralistically realized in the world, but it only comes to be so known as pervasively present, as struggling for full emergence into self-consciousness, with art, religion, and philosophy. The art work, as it were, catches this struggle for emergence as it articulates itself, and embodies it concretely for the contemplation of man. Art participates in this struggle and expresses it in the form of imaginative self-knowledge. The wholeness embodied in the art work carries some mark of this self-consciousness of perfection. It discloses not just any instance of wholeness or perfectionfor things in nature might attain without self-

consciousness their own appropriate perfectionbut one stamped with man's own self-knowledge.

In light of the foregoing we might now try to make more explicit how the end character of art might illuminate the problem of how we find an end in history. Often we tend to think of history as merely a parade of random stories, a succession of "nows" or temporal instants strung out in a line, with only external connection between each moment, between before and after. Such a history would be an endless succession in which it would be absurd to speak of any pos-

sibility of completion. For Hegel, of course, such an endless temporal succession is not properly human history at all. History properly appears when man tries to appropriate such endless succession, giving form to the meaningless supersuccession of moments. Time becomes historically meaningful when, through recollection (*Erinne-rung,* man thoughtfully gathers his past to his present, in a manner that gives the past a meaningful place in the formation of the present, and that gives the present a measure of ballast and articulation in order to make a meaningful future possible. Mere endless succession comes down to being a "bad" infinite, that is, a process of becoming that never comes to any genuine realization of itself. Hegel's claim, however, is that against the "bad" infinite, history manifests a true, genuine infinity; or as I put it just now, a process of becoming that does come to a genuine realization of itself. Hegel's claim about this genuine infinity is controversial of course, because of the future. If time and history have a future, can we say that any process of becoming ever genuinely realizes itself? If the future is the not yet, and thus open in some degree, is not all of human history ineradicably infected with some element of the "bad" infinite? The future is the yet unrealized side of endless succession, and we cannot be completely assured that its realization will overcome the meaninglessness of mere endless succession. Something may remain of the "bad" infinite never to be appropriated.

Now it seems to me that the kind of completion and perfection exhibited by the art work can serve as a means for making intelligible, at least in some measure, Hegel's claims about the end of history, and in a manner wholly consistent with his consignment of art to the realm of Absolute Spirit. If, as I said, the art work is a certain completion of an originative process, it displays an appropriation of time that cannot be characterized in terms of endless succession, the "bad" infinite. All the characteristics of the art work we have delineatedits active nature, its wholeness, its dialectical nature, its interplay of freedom and necessity, individuality and universality, its character as an intrinsic end all point toward a process of becoming that does come to a genuine realization of itself. The art work gathers together such a process of becoming, and is not altogether unlike the philosophical concept itself in being thus recollective. In a word, the art work brings a process of origination to perfection.

The attractiveness of this suggestion in relation to history resides, I think, in the character of this perfection. For this perfection we find in art displays, even in its completeness, an open-ended side. So, for instance, perfection in art is not something achieved just once, where prior to perfection there was only a long ascent, mere stepping stones to this point, and where subsequent to the point of perfection all that

awaits us is a long decline or decadence. Perfection, once achieved, is something to be achieved again and again. Its realization is open to a plurality of possible actualizations. The perfection of this art work, or even of that artistic movement, does not pre-empt the possibility of other future instances of perfection.

15 Perfection is not a univocal concept; within the Hegelian perspective it must be seen as dialectical. Part of what this implies is that the perfection of the art work gives us historical instances of a process of origination that may genuinely realize itself here and how, without exhausting future efforts at different but equally genuine self-actualizations. So we could say that the highest art of a people helps it to be at home with time, without the need to deny the unexpected or devouring character of time future. Perfection in the art work gives us, if the phrase will be allowed, a kind of "temporal eternity," or, alternatively, an "eternalization of the temporal." Such a perfection is implied by Keats, to take but one example, when in response to the singing nightingale, now metamorphosed into a symbol of all art, he says, "Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!"

This kind of perfection is intimately related to the unity of the art work already mentioned. But, again we need to remind ourselves that such a unity is not any static identity. On the contrary, it is the very process itself of concrete unification. What time as endless succession works to scatter, art tries to perfect through unity. Art has always been one of man's chief weapons in his war with decay for just this reason. Man likes to think that his existence springs from some internal principle, but instead finds himself at odds with an external Fate. He turns to art and the unity it gives in order to alleviate this opposition, or at least make it more tolerable. For the unity of the art work, as we implied in previous remarks, tries to present itself as something effortless and free, yet also as something which at the same time is only manifesting an internal necessity. As aestheticians and critics often remind us, the true art work exhibits a kind of organic unity, not just a mechanical unity, a unity determined from within, not one imposed from without. Against the metallic click of the clock and its refusal to be stayed, art's unity becomes a kind of substitute for Destiny.

The relevance of these reflections for the theme of history becomes clearer if we acknowledge that art tries to condense what is significant in "strung-out" time in order to give man an ideal image of historical significance. We might go so far as to say that art reveals spirit in history in a far more concentrated form than is often found in the random contingencies of what we might call "newspaper" history. This need not entail any advocacy of an aestheticism that would flee the contingencies of history. The aesthete uses art either as a means

of escape or as a means of entertainment, but in either case he instrumentalizes art. The aesthete is only an elegant instrumentalist. Again, this runs counter to Hegel's insistence that art contains an end. Art is not a medium for fleeing history, but an actual imaginative struggle with the initially hidden significance of man's historical significance, a significance that may fail to come to sufficient definition if human consciousness is confined to "newspaper" history, that is, history for the utilitarian or purely pragmatic spirit. It is because there is in art something beyond the pragmatic mind that its full significance is not to be found, for Hegel, on the level of objective spirit. We could say that, where objective spirit exhibits the prose of actuality, Absolute Spirit, in one of its guises, reveals the poetry of actuality, in this sense of language, *logos,* approaching its most concentrated and significant form.

In conclusion, let me point out that there is another sense in which the perfection of the art work gives us some glimpse into the genuine infinity of which Hegel speaks.

16 The art work exhibits a certain wholeness, but if we attend to this we find there a kind of compacted fullness which seems to be inexhaustible in terms of finite analysis. For this compacted fullness of the art work is not just a recollective gathering up of the past. It is also a kind of implicit spanning of the future. The art work is always a promise of repeated reinterpretations, repeated resurrections. When great artists sometimes speak of creating for posterity, some intimation of this peculiar futurity of the art work is present. They hope that their work will be a perfection even for the future, something ageless, something immortal in time. The inexhaustibility of the art work is a heritage of past spirit that secretly reaches forward to as yet unborn appreciations.

This inexhaustible character of the art work has often been pointed out, but it is worth it to underline one significant implication that follows from it, namely, the resistance of the art work to finite analysis. For we cannot say that *this* is the meaning of the art work, or that *that* is. Every such assertion which tries to fix the significance of the art work to finite predicates may indeed get at one important point about it, only to find itself missing

another. In this sense, the compacted fullness of the art work tends to chasten any excessive claims made on behalf of finite analysis, or what Hegel would speak of in terms of *Verstand,* the analytical understanding. This inescapable sense of the presence of something "more" makes the art work a kind of meaningful infinity that is not a *Jenseits* elsewhere, but one there, actually before us for our continued contemplation. In this, once again we come across another reason why art is assigned to Absolute Spirit along with religion and philosophy. For in its ability to chasten finite analysis, art manifests its kinship not only with religion but with philosophical reason, *Vernunft,* as Hegel conceives of this.

Notes

1. Cf., for example: B. T. Wilkins, *Hegel's Philosophy of History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974); W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1951).

2. For commentators who put emphasis on the political character of the Hegelian completion, see particularly A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. James H. Nichols Jr. and Allen Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1969); on the completion of world history, see Stanley Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), ch. 2; on the relation of metaphysics and politics, see Raymond Plant, *Hegel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

3. For a discussion of this in relation to historicism, cf. William Desmond, "Hegel, History and Philosophical Contemporaneity," *Filosofia Oggi* 4, no. 2 (1981): 211-26.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften, Werke* bk. 10 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), par. 562:" … *die Geschichte der Religionem mit der Weltgeschichte zusammenfllt."*

5. For some remarks on the relation of history and art history in relation to Hegel's notion of the individual, cf. George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), especially pp. 165 if. O'Brien's remarks are not irrelevant to our present concern. However, my focus is not on art history as illustrating crucial aspects of the general nature of history, but on the way the art work illuminates the possibility of the completion of a process of historical becoming.

6. Cf. "Hegel, Art and Imitation," *CLIO 7,* no. 2 (1978): 303-313; also my review of *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy,* in *The Owl of Minerva,* 12, no. 4 (June 1981): 7-9.

7. *Poetics,* 1451b. 5-6.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke* vol. 13, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* p. 14; J. Glenn Gray, ed., *Hegel on Art, Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1970), p. 23.

9. If asked how this wholistic view of art squares with the fragmentary character of so much modem art, I agree that modem art often does put the emphasis on struggle and opposition, sometimes to the point of almost completely submerging the principle of wholeness traditionally constitutent of art. But I am inclined to add with Hegel that struggle and opposition are moments within the total impulse of art which do not exhaust that impulse. If, indeed, any art work or movement of art were exclusively under the dominating influence of opposition and struggle, there would finally be no art *work* at all. There would be war, not work, war moreover that left no traces of its battles, having collapsed completely in its own destructions. Even the most jarring of contemporary art remains a work only because the necessity of some perhaps tortured wholeness is not entirely absent. This fragmentariness of contemporary art, indeed, has been cited by some as evidence of Hegel's clairvoyant powers in relation to the so-called "death of art." Yet, the longer historical dialectic may perhaps hint at a different conclusion. Though the moment of opposition and antithesis has had a long inning in

modernism, the principle of wholeness was never entirely destroyed, and some might wonder if the necessity of wholeness has perhaps begun to reassert its sway. In any case, I put forward these remarks as suggestions for reflection, not as assertions with the character of solid certainty.

10. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* p. 61; Gray, *Hegel on Art,* p.

11. Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* p. 39, and Gray, *Hegel on Art,* p. 47, where Hegel remarks on the emptiness of the Platonic Idea. We might add, however, that Plato himself does not completely exclude some access to eternity. If time is a moving image of eternity, as the famous words of the *Timaeus* (37D) have it, we have some access to the original, however partial, in this image. This is entailed by the very nature of an image.

12. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die ©sthetik,* pp. 22-23; Gray, *Hegel on Art,* p. 31.

13. Cf., for example, *Enzyklopädie,* par. 558, where Hegel speaks of the human form as the highest and truest external matter in which the spiritual purpose of art is given corporeity and visible expression.

14. On the end character of art, cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik,* pp. 44, 64 ff; Gray, *Hegel on Art,* pp. 51, 70ff. The end character of the art work is related to its internal teleogy, its internal necessity. Thus Hegel speaks of the art work as *Selbstzweck.* On this, cf. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), ch. 17.

15. On perfection and the art work, cf. the review of *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy,* cited in note 6.

16. Cf. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über die Ästhetik,* pp. 157-158, where Hegel speaks of the art work as a free infinity. Cf. also Taylor, *Hegel,* p. 473.

Comment, by Curtis L. Carter

The “end of history” is a topic of considerable interest among Hegel scholars today. The term ‘end’ in this instance refers to the meaning or purpose of actions and events, either in art, or in history. A central concern of Professor Desmond is how the actions of individuals and states, which exist in endless temporal succession, can have meaning in Hegel’s theory of history. His primary focus in this paper is how art as an end provides insight into the end of history. He is not the first among recent Hegel scholars to propose a relation between art and history. O’Brien, for instance, uses the analogy of art and history to develop his own interpretation of Hegel’s theory of reason in history. O’Brien proposes that “historical reality is uniquely individual in some manner similar to the way a work of art is individual.”

[1]

One reason for Desmond’s interest in art and history is his desire to relate Hegel’s view of history to absolute spirit. Normally, the discussion of history in Hegelian terms only takes into consideration history as a part of objective spirit. Art, religion, and philosophy are the exclusive modes in Hegel’s philosophy for establishing a relationship with absolute spirit. In the past, religion has been recognized by the interpreters of Hegel as being important to the understanding of history. The importance of art for the interpretation of Hegel, on the other hand, has received less attention. Of these three, art is most appropriate for Desmond’s purposes, because it presents absolute spirit in the most individualized form. Religion and philosophy might also serve the purpose of linking history to absolute spirit, but they are more oriented toward universal ends and are thus less suited for application to the individual happenings in history. A second reason

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for Desmond's approach, one presumes, is his ongoing effort to demonstrate the cognitive significance of art in Hegel's thought, and to establish the permanent contribution of art to philosophy.

2 Desmond intends that his investigation will provide an alternative to the view that, in Hegel's thought, the end of history is a "bad infinite," consisting of endless succession that never comes to any genuine realization of itself. He intends to demonstrate, instead, that the end of history corresponds to the sense of an end in art.

Desmond's worthy effort to expand upon Hegel's ideas on the end of history, through his reflections on the notion of art as an end, is based on an analogy between art and history. The principal terms in the analogy: 'art history,' and 'end,' however, are more complex than is immediately apparent in his analysis. Determining the exact pairings of terms in the analogy is no simple task because, for instance, Hegel uses the terms 'art,' and 'history,' respectively, in different ways.

'Art' refers to a form of absolute spirit, as well as to particular art works. 'Art' also refers to the activity of making art works, an activity that occurs over time, and in different styles and media, and that has its own history. For the most part, Desmond bases the analogy of art and history on the art work itself. He presents a possible confusion, however, when he introduces the term 'art' into the same context of discourse without specifying any particular sense of the term, that is, without specifying whether he is referring to art as a form of absolute spirit, as an activity for producing art works, or as a product in the form of the art work.

There is also a question in my mind whether it is possible to abstract an end from a particular art work without looking into its place in art history and without considering the matter of an end from the more general perspective of the philosophy of art. Since Hegel outlines the progression of art history in symbolic, classical, and romanticist modes, each with its own end, and, collectively, with the overall end of presenting absolute spirit individualized in sensuous form, it is difficult to see how particular art work can provide

the necessary end required to give meaning to itself apart from art history and the philosophy of art.

'History' is also used in at least two distinct ways in Hegel's writings, first as the "history of the world," and second, as the intellectual discipline that exists to interpret the world. The "history of the world" consists of the events in time through which spirit manifests itself in a people, or a state. History as an intellectual discipline consists of original history, reflective history, and philosophical history. The aim of original history is to present an interpretation of events based on personal observations and on participation. Reflective history devel-

ops an overview of events according to the historian's choice of framework; for example, he may choose among universal, pragmatic, or critical frameworks. Philosophical history explores the role of spirit as the director of events in world history; it incorporates the sum total of all possible perspectives.

3

Desmond is aware of these different senses of 'history' in Hegel's thought, but he does not always distinguish in context which sense of history is being compared with art. His primary concern seems to be the analogy between the substantive ends in art works and events in world history. Here, there is a problem in determining precisely to what aspect of history the artistic end is intended to apply. Desmond is not specific on this point, but it is probably not the ends of particular persons or events, to which the artistic end is applied, because the individual units of consequence, that is, the efficient causes of history, on Hegel's theory, are "peoples" embodied in states, rather than particulars.4 Particular persons and events, at the level of history, have significance primarily through their rational participation in, or connections to, the ethical, moral, religious, and artistic ends of a people or state. If Desmond's claim is that art works are intended to provide an end for all the actions of a people and for the complex interactions of states, his solution seems overly simplistic. State includes moral, ethical, political, and religious elements whose ends are not reducible to Desmond's artistic end. Perhaps Desmond only intends to say that the artistic end augments our understanding of the events of history, and, with this weaker claim one can agree.

It should be noted, moreover, with respect to Desmond's claim that art works give unity and meaning to the temporal events of history, that it is also true that art works sometimes contribute to fragmentation of a culture, for instance, when they engender disagreement over matters of artistic style, or, more importantly, when their content threatens community values. These disruptive effects of art on the course of historical events, including art's own history, as well as the history of the world, are not necessarily negative, because art is frequently an important element of the dialectic

processes in history. In such instances, however, art functions not as an end, but as a *means* to advancement of spirit's quest for the next stage of artistic and of historical development.

Desmond also compares art and history according to their respective capabilities for interpreting the events of world history. His characterization of 'history,' in these instances, as "pragmatic newspaper history," which he contrasts with the fuller sense of interpretation that an art work can give to events in world history, is remarkably thin, compared to Hegel's more comprehensive analysis of the different approaches to history, referred to above. Although it is con-

ceivable that art works, especially when considered in light of Hegel's theory of art history and the philosophy of art, may indeed offer a richer account of actual events, Desmond's argument would be more convincing if the comparison were between a more substantial form of interpretive history, such as Hegel himself provides in his various approaches to the study of history. A comparison of art and "philosophical history," for instance, would result in a far more interesting and balanced account of the relative merits of art and history than is indicated by Desmond's comparison of art with newspaper history.

Thus far, the discussion has emphasized the two principal terms, 'art' and 'history'. The notion of an end that links these two also requires a closer look. First, in what sense is art an end? Desmond identifies the following characteristics of art as an end:

1. Art is an end in itself, as opposed to a means. It is not parasitical because it is productive of its own content, is not in subservience to political, moral, or other extraneous ends, and is not a mere stepping stone to philosophy.

2. The art work is an end in the sense of *telos* as proposed by the Greeks. In other words, it is the origination, completion, and perfection of a process of becoming, emergent out of the productive power of the artist.

3. Art as an end displays an appropriation of time that cannot be characterized in terms of endless succession, the bad infinite.

4. Art as an end allows for perfection as something to be achieved again and again. It provides historical instances of a process of origination that may genuinely realize itself here and how without any need to deny the future.

5. As an end, art provides an ideal with infinite possibilities for future interpretation.

As a means of advancing the discussion of the central issue in Desmond's paper, I will comment briefly on each of these characteristics.

My first point concerns Desmond's and Hegel's claim that art is an end but not a means. This claim is misleading as stated, because the end/means

roles for Hegel are relative rather than absolute. Hegel and Desmond both freely violate the end/means distinction. Hegel asserts the independence of art from various external interests, but he repeatedly attributes to art certain functional roles, in the *Lectures on Aesthetics* and elsewhere.

5 Here are some instances found in Knox's translation of the *Aesthetics:*

Art presents an object in which man recognizes his inner thoughts and feelings (p. 32).

Art's vocation is to unveil the truth in the form of sensuous artistic

conventions free from the theoretical, which would change art into universal thought and concept (pp. 38, 39).

The beauty of art is a means of dissolving the opposition of nature and spirit (p. 56).

Art mitigates the ferocities of desires (p. 48).

Art is a means of bringing religious truth home to people's feelings (p. 102).

These citations from Hegel's *Aesthetics* show clearly that he does not intend art solely as an end. Desmond's entire paper, moreover, violates the end/means distinction, when he proposes art as a *means* to provide an end for history. Unless there is a profound misunderstanding of the issue on my part, it seems wise to recognize that Hegel does not treat art works simply as ends.

Second, Desmond's appeal to the Greek philosophers' notion of *telos* in support of his notion of art as an end leads to difficulties of another sort. The Greek term *'telos'* is as ambiguous as the English 'end'.

6 Thus it can mean simply a quite fortuitous boundary, for example, "the end of the road," or 'terminus' in a more formal sense of a goal reached or intended. Based on his remarks here, I think Desmond has in mind the second of these senses of *telos* as the end toward which some activity is directed: in nature, for example, the fetus as the terminus of the reproductive process; in human activity, for example, the statue as the product of the artist's making. That this sense *is* embodied in the Greek tradition is certainly true. What is also true is that the same Greek tradition included another, totally nonteleological aspect: the materialist mechanism of the atomists, in which *telos* is simply the chance product that emerges from the clashing of blind forces. Thus "becoming" in this other Greek tradition is a random, undirected process not unlike the meaningless succession of events for which an end of history is sought in Desmond's paper.

Desmond's use of such terms as "becoming', 'power', and 'actualizing'

suggests that it is in fact the Aristotelian notion of *telos* that he really intends. On that supposition, what he says needs amplification. A discussion of Aristotle's concept of *telos* must begin with a distinction among agent, activity, and end product of the activity. Given that distinction, *telos* has a double sense, rather than the unique one that Desmond seems to indicate. With reference to the activity, *telos* signifies the product toward which, or in which, the activity naturally terminates. It is this sense of *telos* that Desmond seems to have in mind. The other sense is actually prior for Aristotle, that is, *telos* with reference to the agent. It is here that *telos* acquires its sense of "end" or purpose: what the agent consciously intends as the end product of a "becoming" that he initiates. Desmond seems to take no account

of this sense of *telos,* which is prior for Aristotle even in the order of nature, where there is a specific plan to be actualized in the natural activity.

On the basis of this analysis, Desmond's statement contains some confusing elements. In what sense is art an end? In Aristotle's sense, not at all. Art for him is the productive activity, the making, whereas the end is in the product that emerges. In contrast to what Desmond says, however, 'art' (poiesis

*) can be for Aristotle a *telos* in the sense of perfection, not of the product of the activity, but the activity itself, in as much as this perfects the agent, because, through it, he is actualizing certain innate potentialities.

But to return to the important point that *telos,* said with respect to the agent rather than the activity, signifies end as purpose. From this perspective, to say that the art work is *telos* means for Aristotle that this product of the artist's making is something he both cognizes and wills *before* the inception of his productionso that man as "maker" is quite different from man acting as a natural agent, as he does, for example, in generative activity. In this latter case, he might be said to "intend" the product in some analogous or equivocal sense, but since he does not function as a free agent, he is, as a natural agent, not truly engaged in purposive activity. This important distinction seems lost, or at least obscured, when one says that the art work is the completion of a process of becoming, or something emergent out of the productive power of the artistthat could be said equally of the fetus.[7]

In artistic production, as the artist views it, the *telos* or end thus pre-exists within the agent as something to be finalized through his productive activity. Hence Desmond's statement that the art work (product) gives form to an initially amorphous power, actualizing a latent potency, could lead to a serious misunderstanding. The internal dynamic power of the artist is not amorphous at the beginning of his productive activity, but is already actualized by the *telos* conceived and willed, in anticipation of the actualization of the external *telos* or the product. The *telos* that the artist proposes for execution is already the form of the product that is to result. As one reads Desmond, with his emphasis upon activity to the exclusion of the agent, one might think that the origination is spontaneous and not

planned. What is, incidentally, truly amorphous and latent in this production is the matter with which the artisan works. It is this formlessness that is actualized in the creative process; and one suspects that Desmond is not clearly distinguishing the potency of the agent (a dynamic potency or power) from the passive potency of the material.

This rather lengthy commentary on Desmond's use of *telos* leads to a conclusion contrary to his own, that is, that the end in art dis-

cussed in Desmond's paper is not primarily the *telos* of Aristotle and the Greeks, but is something quite different. The term is the same, but its content has been changed by Hegel himself and by his modem predecessors such as Kant. Art as an end, in Hegel's thought, is not a product of an end that is already formed in the artist's mind and will prior to its being manifest in the art work. Hence Desmond's account of art as an end need not appeal to Aristotle's *telos.* Rather, Hegel's sense of art as an end is more along the lines of *selbstzweck* (self-purpose), which Hegel applies to those entities that express their own ends.

8 In art, according to Hegel, the end manifests itself in the art work and is individualized in the art image rather than in the universal concepts of philosophy. The self-validating character of art as an end in Hegel's thought might suggest that Hegel owes a greater debt to Kant than to Aristotle, but that is a subject for another time.

The remaining three characteristics of art as an end can be dealt with in less detail. My third point concerns Desmond's claim that, if the art work represents a certain completion of an originative process, it displays an appropriation of time that cannot be characterized in terms of endless succession: the bad infinite. I can agree with him that the art work represents a genuine realization of spirit, and that its value is not to be erased by future developments in art, or in philosophy. But the self-purpose of the art work is an end only in a limited sense, and it is not the final or complete end for art, or for history. The limitations of art works as ends are established by the fact that there can be many such ends, no one of which is complete in itself. The self-purpose of the art work does not really solve the problem of the bad infinite, as Desmond supposes. The particular art work exists merely as one among a proliferation of limited ends; thus art creates its own potential bad infinite, consisting of autonomous and unrelated art works. Particulars are, therefore subject to their own bad infinite, much in the way that uninterpreted events in history are subject to the same. Apart from the more comprehensive perspective of art history, philosophy of art, and the more universal perspective of philosophy, the art work cannot

reveal fully the end of art, and, also, it cannot disclose the final end of history.

My fourth point is closely related to the third. It concerns the perfection of the art work. Desmond orchestrates two senses of perfection in his paper: the one, perfection in the sense of completion of an originating process, and the other, perfection in the sense of a kind of ageless wholeness that gathers up the past and projects into the future. The latter perfection, he says, is inexhaustible in terms of finite analysis.

Perfection, in the sense of completion of an originating process, is responsible in part for the autonomous character of the art work in

Desmond's presentation. It was his emphasis upon the perfection or completeness of the art work in itself that led me to raise the question of a bad infinite with respect to the plurality of the "perfected" art work, each with its own end. My intent was to show that Desmond places too much emphasis upon the particular art work as the source of an end.

To some extent, the second sense of perfection, that is, perfection in the sense of "ageless wholeness that spans the past and the future," might offer a correction to the autonomous character of the art work that is implicit in the first sense of perfection. But it would still be necessary to give an explanation of how the art work is related to other art works, and to other aspects of objective and absolute spirit.

Another characteristic of perfection in the second sense, its inexhaustibility in terms of finite analysis, raises additional questions. According to Desmond, the art work is always a promise of repeated interpretations, so we can never say that *this* or *that* reading is *the* meaning. From the point of view of art criticism, I would agree that art works are in general open to new possibilities of interpretation. The result, however, in the present context, is complete ambiguity with respect to the end or meaning of the art work. How does this possibility of a completely open reading of the art work affect Desmond's thesis concerning the analogy of art to history? It would seem to undermine his claim that art as an end will necessarily enable us to better understand, and provide the final end of, history. How, for example, would we decide which of the many possible readings of an art work are applicable to the end of history? Unless, of course, we want to say that history has as many ends as there are readings of the work of art, we need more than the art work as an end to find the solution to the end of history. It is doubtful that the range of ends for history allows for the same ambiguity or relativism of interpretation that Desmond has proposed for art works.

The art work in fact is never completely open to new interpretations, however, due to the constraints imposed by its own form and content, and by the framework of interpretation brought to it. Interpretation itself presupposes a framework that includes its own prior ends. The "end" discovered in the process of interpreting an art work is thus already subject

to the dialectic of prior ends that are implicit in the structure of the interpretive framework.

One final point concerning art works as ends for interpreting history requires mention. This is the question of which art works are appropriate to serve as ends for interpreting the meaning of history. Are all art works suitable for this purpose? (If not, which ones, and how do we decide?) When people speak of using art works to enhance their understanding, they usually have in mind certain kinds, and

not the entire corpus of works produced. Some art works are excluded because they lack universality; others are rejected because they are not understood. Some art works are merely interesting as decorative objects. Hegel himself recognizes that certain art works are more suitable than others for the purpose of disclosing spirit. Desmond also implies such a division among art works when he refers to the highest art as a source of understanding its time. The problem remains, how to choose among the varieties of art works which, for us, will serve as a guide to the meaning of history? The answer to this question cannot be pursued any further here except to say that life style, including prior value choices, guides what people find meaningful. The dialectic that guides the formation of ends relating to art and to history begins long before we approach the art work and continues on thereafter into the domain of religion and philosophy.

Notes

1. George Dennis O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 122.

2. See William Desmond, "Hegel, Art and Imitation," *Clio* 7, 2 (1978): 302-312; idem, "Review of Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy," *The Owl of Minerva* 12, 4 (1981): 7-9.

3. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* trans. H. B. Nisbet, German edition ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 11-30.

4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Reason in History,* trans. Robert S. Hartman (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1953), pp. 43-56. See also, O'Brien, *Hegel on Reason and History,* pp. 1213.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 32, 38, 39, 48, 56, 102. Earlier I noted that art functions also as an instrument of cultural fragmentation.

6. The interpretation of the Greek notion of *telos* incorporated in this discussion is based on comments prepared by my colleague William E. Dooley, who very kindly prepared this survey of Greek notions of *telos,* with Desmond's use of the term in mind.

7. See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1032b. 1-14; 1034a. 21-23; 1035a. 21-34; 1070b. 33, 34. See also, *De Anima* 431a. 1-4; *Metaphysics* 1049a. 1-4. My colleague Joan Kung kindly supplied these references concerning Aristotle's use of *telos.*

8. Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 470.

Chapter Nine
On the Impotence of Spirit: Profane Reflections on Hegel's Philosophy of History

George Di Giovanni

I

My aim in this paper is to defend the validity of a slogan that, I believe, should preface Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History.* The slogan is: *The impotence of nature is an impotence of spirit.* It is a variation on Croce's famous quip about Hegel's philosophy of nature, but what I mean by it is nothing like what Croce had in mind.

1 In fact, my first task is to explain in what sense the slogan should be understood, and why I think it is relevant to a discussion of Hegel's philosophy of history.

The expression "impotence of nature" comes from Hegel. He used it more than once, but most notoriously at the beginning of his *Philosophy of Nature* in order to explain why the philosopher, as he maps out all the elements of his idea of nature, should not expect to catch in it all the details of actual nature or, for that matter, should expect nature always to conform in all its manifestations to the norms set by his idea of it.2 Before undertaking his own work of idealization, the philosopher presupposes that nature has already been subjected to the labor of scientific experience, and that the multitude of its phenomena have already been reduced to some essential characteristics by being transformed into objects of scientific concepts and

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scientific theories. It is from these that the philosopher takes his starting point in order to arrive at his own idea of nature.

Hegel's claim, made in what is supposedly one of his most mature works, calls to mind the attitude toward nature that he had already exhibited much earlier in life when, in order to meet Traugott Krug's request that the idealists deduce his writing pen from the Absolute, he had replied that the philosopher has no need to bother about such lowly things as pens, let alone Krug's pen.

3 At that time, however, Hegel was defending Schelling's idealism, and in the context of the latter, since it was an idealism based on intellectual intuition, the attitude made sense indeed.4 The question that now arises, however, and that will call into question, as we shall soon see, the possibility of Hegel's philosophy of history, is whether he can afford to entertain the same attitude in the context of his own form of idealism.

This is not the place, of course, to enter into a formal discussion of the difference between Schelling's and Hegel's idealism. It should be pointed out, however, that the triple mediation on which Hegel's mature system is based represents Hegel's way of avoiding the intuitionism of Schelling. Let me explain why. One can understand, quite in general, why each of the three mediations proposed by Hegelthe logical mediation, the mediation of spirit or historical mediation, and the mediation of natureis necessary for a full reconstruction of the structure of experience.5 Take, for instance, the mediation of nature.6 Man's consciousness of himself as spirit, which is enshrined in a philosophical system, runs the risk of being a mere delusion, a self-serving characterization that bears no relation to the facts, unless it is arrived at by a process of confrontation with nature. It requires that nature stand with its contingency opposite to spirit, and that man first work on it precisely as a contingent thing transforming it into an ideal object only by dint of slow, hard work. Unless this is the case, unless nature and man's natural involvement with it stand between spirit and spirit's idea of itself as a link that makes their union possible by keeping them apart in the first place, the two would collapse together into a play of private intentions that have no claim to objectivity.

On the other hand, the same presence of nature that is required to add seriousness to man's self-consciousness also runs the risk of rendering it, in fact, altogether impossible. For the contingency of nature might so disperse man's actions as to frustrate any attempt to find running through them some single self-totalizing intention which would justify claiming that he succeeds, *qua* spirit, to rise above nature and to comprehend it. If man is to be spirit, one must grant to him with respect to nature an autonomous, efficacious source of action that allows him to transform nature into idea. Spirit itself, in other

words, must provide a mediation of its own that has the function of keeping spirit and nature together.

7 It is a function directly opposite to the one attributed to nature's mediation.

Finally, if the two mediations just described succeed, they imply that it is also possible at some point for spirit to express them both in its idea of itself as necessary moments of it. The logical idea, that is to say, spirit's explicit knowledge of itself, must be in turn a mediating link between spirit and nature.8 In practice, this means: (1) that the idea must be apprehended by spirit as the product of its own operation, for otherwise spirit would lack autonomy; (2) that it must also unfold in the face of spirit with objective necessity, for otherwise it would not dispel the possibility that spirit's conscious life constitutes a merely private world. Or again, the idea must be developed into a system according to objective necessity, yet reflect at the same time the subjective development of a consciousness. The most notable consequence, therefore, of Hegel's triple mediation is that its ideal moment cannot be restricted to what goes, in Hegel's actual system, under the title of Logic, but must also encompass a philosophy of nature and a philosophy of spirit. The whole of Hegel's actual system represents only one mediation, namely, the logical one. The idea, as idea *of idea,* must turn out to be also idea *of nature* and idea of *the process leading from nature to idea.* If this were not the case, spirit would fail to express conceptually the conformity between its knowledge of itself and its phenomenal reality. But without this expression, the possibility of the natural and historical mediation would also remain open to doubt. It is precisely the ground of this possibility that Schelling (and, *mutatis mutandis,* Fichte before him) had thought to lie beyond the limit of conceptualization; and for this reason, in order to assert the truth of his philosophical system, Schelling had been obliged to import into it extra-logical elements such as intuition. Hegel found himself in a position of dispensing with these elements the moment the possibility occurred to him, some time in the Jena years,9 of a logic that would be at the same time metaphysics. At that point, he rightly thought he was bringing the idealism of his predecessors to its proper conclusion.

On the face of it, of course, it appears that with this move Hegel had indeed brought idealism to completion, but also to an extreme of absurdity. For the image of an idea that unfolds itself in all its elements according to logical necessity, but in virtue of this unfolding suddenly becomes idea of nature, only to revert to purely reflective thought through yet another process of unfoldingall this smacks of the comic. It calls into question the seriousness of what Hegel is doing, for it would seem that in all his mediations he is in fact never stepping outside the magic circle of reflection; he is constantly mediating ideas

with ideas, never thought with reality, as he claims to be doing. This is the point that his leftwing as well as his existentialist critics have constantly argued against him.

Objections of this sort make sense, however, only if one fails to take seriously the nature of Hegel's triple mediation; or if one were really to think that, according to Hegel, mediation is exhausted in all of its three aspects within the system alone. On the other hand, if the system is understood for what I take it to be, that is to say, only as the logical moment of the triple mediation, then there will be nothing preposterous about it; its only claim is that it is possible to comprehend and express conceptually the nature of rationality and its place in the physical world and in history. Few classical philosophers would want to disagree with this thesis. Moreover, ridding the system of nonlogical elements is the only way of avoiding interpreting it, as Croce did,

10 as a mixture of pragmatic considerations about nature, historical narrations, and ideal interpretations of history, none of them individually sufficient as expressions of any particular reality, yet jumbled together in such a way that, together, they give the impression of explaining reality as a whole. On the contrary, the effect is the strengthening of the requirements that each mediation must satisfy; each must be a complete mediation on its own terms so that to grant the success of one is to have granted already the possibility of the other two. In practice this means, on the one hand, that philosophical wisdom is the comprehension of a mediation already accomplished in nature and history; it is the re-enactment in the medium of pure thought of the natural and historical mediation. On the other hand, it means that the experience man has of nature, even in the course of his most immediate transactions with it, although nonconceptual in character, must be assumed to carry a meaning that can be abstracted and developed for its own sake. Human praxis, in other words, must be assumed to have from the start a theoretical significance.

I can summarize the point just made by saying that Hegel's idealism requires that the logical system be accompanied by a phenomenology; for it should always be possible to recognize, running through the course of

actual human experience, the process by which the same spirit is being realized that the system then expresses as achieved in the form of pure idea. Unlike the pragmatic histories of Fichte and Schelling, which were more akin to myths than to actual history (for the Absolute to whose presence in history they gave witness was ex *hypothesi* incommensurate with any human experience), Hegel's phenomenology must be true history in order to serve its purposefictionalized history, perhaps, because fiction can often relate far more

tellingly the truth of a situation than the prosaic narration of many facts, but history nonetheless.

Now we can understand why Hegel, unlike Schelling, cannot afford to dismiss lightly the alleged impotence of nature. Hegel needs the contingency of nature in order to keep nature in opposition to the logical idea. At the same time, he must also assume that one can deal rationally with it; and this means, in the first place, that its necessityif I may speak paradoxicallymust be established logically as a moment in the development of the idea *of idea*

11 : but also that, even prior to its being treated as a category of thought, contingency has already been effectively contained by human action and transformed into the material out of which history is made. Both requirements, namely, that the contingency of nature be declared irreducible, yet contained by thought and action, must be respected if the triple mediation is to work. But can they be respected? This is the crucial question that confronts anyone interested in the Hegelian experiment. It would seem, on first reflection, that the question must be answered negatively. For the moment one claims that spirit and the idea somehow overreach and contain the contingency of natureas indeed they must if their mediation is to be seriousone immediately runs the risk of equivocating in the use of the term ‘nature’. As overreached by spirit, let alone by idea, nature is already idealized; it is the object of intentions and no longer just nature. And what guarantee is there that objectified, idealized nature is still nature itself, only brought to a higher level of existence? Why could it not be, as the left-wing critics of Hegel have so often insisted, only an epiphenomenon of real nature, totally dependent on an illusionary apprehension on the part of man of his own place in reality? In order to forestall this risk, one would have to require that nature exercise in relation to spirit and idea the same overreaching and containing function that they are presumed to exercise with respect to it. In other words, one should expect nature to prefigure physically the configuration of ideal reflection and moral action. But this is precisely what nature cannot do, for *ex hypothesi* the movement that belongs to it is nonreflective and thus lacks the singleness of intention that the life of spirit requires.

Hegel's triple mediation thus appears slanted from the start toward its idealistic side. One can well appreciate, therefore, the efforts of such a commentator as Emil Fackenheim in trying to redress this overly idealistic appearance that it conveys.[12] The merit of Fackenheim is his dear recognition that the Hegelian system presupposes a mediation that takes place in history; he also acknowledges that the possibility of such an existential mediation depends on whether it can be shown that the contingency of nature can be respected, yet effec-

tively contained. However, having pointed to nature as the area in which the validity of Hegel's idealism is to be tested, because of his own religious interests, Fackenheim goes on to search for the kind of religious experience and the kind of theology that would provide the existential antecedents for the system. His conclusion is that the Hegelian synthesis presupposes the truth of the Protestant Christian experience of God. And, while a conclusion of this sort would certainly find a receptive ear from the religious manfor to him, to see nature is to recognize the work of its Creatorit is bound, on the other hand, to make Hegel's idealism all the more suspect to the agnostic for whom religion already belongs to the sphere of idealized experience. As for Fackenheim, since he is unable as a religious man to accept the witness of Christian faith, he feels obliged, in keeping with his own line of interpretation, also to reject the Hegelian system. At the end of his book, he stands before that system as an unhappy soul. He wishes one could fulfill the ideal of wisdom enshrined in it; he even feels that he cannot avoid being motivated by that ideal; he cannot see his way, however, to the existential means for realizing it.

13

Suppose, however, that one does not want to follow the way of Hegel's left-wing critics or the way of Fackenheim, or revert to some form of Kantian formalism. What then? Granted that it is impossible to hold in check the idealistic side of the triple mediation by requiring nature to validate the actions of spirit; to require this, one would have to revert to a theological view of nature. Granted also that nature must nonetheless enter *qua* nature into the process of mediation. The only remaining alternative is that spirit itself let nature enter into that process, which is to say that spirit manifests in its own action the presence of nature. But nature's dispersion, its contingency, is what characterizes it most; its power, in other words, lies precisely in its impotence. Hegel's triple mediation can work, therefore, only if it is seriously shown that: (1) nature's impotence is also an impotence of spirit, and (2) that without this impotence, spirit would not be actual even as spirit.

II

I return to the slogan with which I began. The question now, however, is how seriously that slogan can be imputed to Hegel himself. The classical text to which to turn for an answer is, of course, the section in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology of Spirit,* in which Hegel gives his account of the origin of self-consciousness (and with it, of history). There, if anywheresince human action is being described paradigmatically, to be sure, but still with reference to the existential

conditions under which it occurswe should be able to detect the role that nature presumably plays in that action. And first we must observe how Hegel makes his move from natural existence to self-consciousness. Crucial to this move is the introduction of the idea of 'life,' for the need to conceive nature organically only arises when one is interested, not just in the forms that hold together nature's many appearances, but in the possibility of achieving truth about these appearances.

14 There would be nothing inconsistent, for instance, about conceiving nature along purely mechanistic lines, provided one were to consider it *abstractly* without reference to a consciousness experiencing it. It has become apparent in the first four chapters of the *Phenomenology,* however, that all attempts to treat nature strictly as an 'other' of consciousness fall apart the moment one begins to wonder how, when conceived in this way, nature can possibly become the object of an experience. The idea of 'life' arises, in other words, as soon as one begins to look at nature as the place where a consciousness operates; the idea determines nature precisely as prefiguring, even as nature, the intentional structure of consciousness. The idea of 'life' provides an obvious link between natural existence and self-consciousness.

Intentionality implies a special control on the part of a subject over its own being. What 'life' signifies, therefore, is not so much a special, material determination of nature as a new mode of existence that certain natural individuals enjoy because of the determination nature has achieved in them. As the idea is first introduced in the *Phenomenology,* however, it still represents nature only as nature would appear to an outside observer; nature remains an abstract concept, as Hegel would say.15 It is adequate, therefore, only as the expression of living subjects that have not yet actualized the interiority made possible for them by their own being. With reference to them, 'life' means indeed a certain mastery on their part over their operations, but a mastery that they have received from nature and that they exercise anonymously. Or, to put the matter in a different wayin terms now of the kind of self-awareness that a subject would gain by looking at nature through the idea of 'life'such a subject would indeed become aware of its

own intentional ‘life’, but only implicitly; that subject would still interpret it objectivelyI mean to say, as if it were just one more configuration of natureand leave completely unexpressed the interiority that such a subject enjoys because of it as subject. The move, in chapter 4 of the *Phenomenology,* from ‘life’ to self-consciousness requires therefore not just the further elaboration of the idea of ‘life’, but in the first place a change in attitude with respect to its own being on the part of the consciousness that is being observed in the *Phenomenology,* and that is now in possession of the

idea of ‘life’. What is required is the identification of a new experience in virtue of which consciousness becomes explicitly aware of its own subjectivity and begins to function accordingly. More precisely, what is required is the identification of the existential conditions under which any such experience could occur. As the expression of this radically new experience, the idea of ‘natural life’ would have to be suitably modified. It will then give place, as we all know, to the categories of social life.

One should note that there is a remarkable parallel between Hegel’s and Kant’s handling of ‘life’. For both of them, the idea must be introduced in a science of nature when at issue is, not just the determination of nature, but a possibility of science itself *qua* product of reason. The problem is one of conceiving nature in such a way that it can be presumed to respond to the interests of reason. For both philosophers, therefore, ‘life’ serves as a mediating link between theoretical and practical reason. For, when it is said of nature that it is ”alive,” nature is being expressed in a form which implies that the intentional structure of reason is already at work in it. Because of this implication, however, Kant had refused to grant to the idea strict objective value. He took it to be, rather, the expression of the subjective requirements of scientific and moral praxis rather than a determination of nature itself. Hegel proceeds, instead, in the directly opposite direction. Just because human praxis requires a certain kind of nature, it follows, according to him, that praxis itself, even moral praxis, must be understood in continuity with nature and as a further development of it. Any reflective expression of the conditions of praxis should be expected to have significance also for a speculative comprehension of nature itself. This is the line of argument Hegel follows. He cannot claim to have established its validity, however, in spite of its *prima facie* plausibility, unless he anchors it somehow on an existential basis. He must identify some experience in which an act of freedom is revealed as emerging out of a natural context. It is precisely the possibility of some such experience that Kant had denied but that Hegel now tries to establish in his text on the beginning of self-consciousness.

16 Here again, stated from the point of view of the Kantian problem, is the whole problem of Hegel’s triple mediation.

How does Hegel portray, however, the beginning of actual self-conscious life? We should be clear about what to expect in the transition from the implicit self-consciousness of natural existence to the explicit self-consciousness of a moral, historical subject. Kant's claim about the autonomy of moral life must be respected. One, therefore, should not expect self-consciousness to arise out of its natural antecedents, as if its appearance were simply the unfolding of something already present in them. Whatever its genetic dependence on nature,

once it has made its appearance, the only justification for its appearing that is valid from its own standpoint is the actual fact that it has appeared. One must be ready to accept the coming to be of self-consciousness as a radically new event. Yet there must still be some continuity between it and nature. This is precisely the point to be established in order to avoid the formalism of Kant. The task, therefore, is to observe at what point an organism, operating under intentions of nature that affect it quite anonymously, begins to act as a self-conscious subject, and to discover whether, granted *ex hypothesi* that the new mode of existence is irreducible to any previous form of life, its emergence presupposes conditions in nature that, although not sufficient, are nonetheless necessary to itI mean to say, not just necessary from the standpoint of a detached observer, for whom necessity is a function of his own interest in systematizing all aspects of experiences, but necessary in an existential sense, inasmuch as the self-conscious organism experiences its newly acquired autonomy as still somehow bound to nature.

I suspect that, taking as a starting point Hegel's concepts of 'life' and 'desire', one can go a long way toward raising natural life to deliberate conscious existence without having to assume any break from nature. Much if not all of what Marx had to say about man in his more humanistic period, when he was presumably the closest to Hegel, could be accounted for on Hegel's own terms quite naturalistically, without involving self-consciousness proper. (Marx, of course, would welcome this development.) I would extend this claim to include also, but with some hesitation, what nowadays Habermas has to say about man. There is no reason, granted highly intelligent animals, why one should not expect them to learn how to deal with their environment symbolically; and, once the process of symbolization is set in motion, also to discover that pleasures can be multiplied and maximized if one learns to sublimate desires by directing them toward nature, artificially modified by symbols. With this discovery, their desires would be freed from the material limitations imposed upon them by nature and could roam as far and wide as the imagination allows. Yet, as long as the highly sophisticated organisms we have assumed still operate out of interests anonymously dictated to them by nature, in spite of all their technocratic skills, they would still remain for Hegel mere *animals.*

They would no doubt have consciousness of themselves as individuals operating for certain goals in a given natural and communal setting. But they would not enjoy self-consciousness proper, for they would still lack a self.

When, however, does the self and its accompanying consciousness truly come to be? It arises, according to Hegel, in the course of communal life at the moment when, perhaps on the occasion of some

primitive struggle for food or some far more complex state of warfare, the issue motivating the contestants is no longer the satisfaction of a desire simply for the sake of disposing of a need whether real or artificialbut the satisfaction of it inasmuch as achieving it would be a means, on the part of the contestants, of asserting their fight to have the desire; the legitimacy of the desire itself becomes the issue.

17 At this moment, of course, desire ceases to be the particular manifestation of the anonymous life of nature; desire becomes *someone's* desire or the expression of *someone's* claim to exist for his own sake. Desire is thus turned upon itself, as Hegel would put it. It becomes infinite with respect to nature, not only in the weak sense of being able to extend as far as the imagination can reach, but in the much stronger sense of having overreached nature. Desire now comprehends nature since it has made nature into an occasion for the realization of a claim to existence that nature by itself could never satisfy.

We are all familiar with this thesis of Hegel. I am not convinced, however, that all its implications are as well understood as they should be. It is not true, as Marx says that, for Hegel the essence of man is work. According to Hegel, social recognition is what constitutes man's humanity. Work and technocracy, whatever the natural interest that originally motivates them, are part of our humanity only to the extent that they too are implicated in the dialectic of recognition. And it is important to understand that the recognition is at once a practical and a theoretical deed. It is practical because its effect is to make of desire something valuable for its own sake: recognition confers upon desire total existence. But this idealization of desire, while undoubtedly a manifestation of freedom, is not an arbitrary act. It is not, as it would be for Kant or Fichte, a resolve to impose upon nature intentions that are totally foreign to it and even do violence to it. Rather, in order for the original conflict to turn into a contest for mutual recognition between contestants, it is necessary that the contestants have already acquired a certain distance with respect to their own desire. The latter must become for the contestants an object of *recognition;* in this sense, their new contest implies a theoretical moment. Unless they have

already freed themselves from the immediacy with which the needs of nature press upon them, and unless they are in a position to contemplate nature for its own sake, any question of legitimacy of desire would not arise. Nature itself would both pose and resolve anonymously any such question simply by the process of generating needs. And it must be stressed that the distance from nature now required is not the kind that symbolization alone would make possible, and that would still be consistent with attitudes toward it that are exclusively manipulative and predatory. Rather, the distance must allow a freedom to let nature appear simply as it is; this

distance is the freedom that begets the wonder which is the beginning of philosophy, as Aristotle recognized a long time ago.

Here it is, enshrined in man's first historical deed, the same play between subjective freedom and objective necessity that is the essence of the logical mediation. The beginning of history is also the beginning of the process that should eventually lead to the pure expression of contemplative freedom, which is the Logic. Here also is Hegel's answer to Kant's formalism. Nature becomes a thing-in-itself, only when we let it appear as one by providing for it the infinite space of reason. And, only when we gain this freedom with respect to it, are we also able to look into it for the natural foundations of the values we then establish as a community of rational subjects. Kant's humanism had to remain formal because he understood theoretical praxis after the model set by classical modern science, as if it were a purely technological manipulation of experience.

The problem of the Hegelian triple mediation, however, is still not resolved, for according to the terms it stipulates, logical mediation requires the support of nature if it is to be effective. And as Hegel reconstructs the original historical deed, while nature is no doubt present in it, that presence works against man as a nemesis; for the contestants who have transformed the prehistorical struggle for food into a battle of prestige, since there are no limits to the demands that prestige can make upon them, lose all sense of natural limitation; they are fated from the start to self-destruction.

In their hurry to transform nature into human reality, they fail to carry over into the newly transformed nature the limits that belong to it precisely as nature. And nature reasserts those limits by destroying those who have dared to ignore them. The battle for prestige leads to the death of the contestants and, in effect, to a return to a natural state of existence.

18 The first protagonists of human history are thus typical epiphenomena of nature; they appear to set history in motion, but they never really manage to complete even their intended first historical deed.

Does the slave who follows upon the primordial warriors fare any better? Can he provide for history a more effective starting point? I think that he

can, but to understand how, we must modify somewhat Hegel's description of him and of his experience with nature. As we all know, the slave works, on the one hand, for the sake of the master whom he experiences as an autonomous source of power, and on the other, under the influence of nature whose needs he suffers immediately.[19] Potentially, therefore, his work is already historical, for the intention behind it is to modify the contingent requirements of nature in order to satisy the ideal demands of freedom. The slave himself, however, becomes an actual historical figure only when he discovers

that the master's freedom is after all his own. At that point, to his idealization of nature, which he has accomplished only objectively in virtue of his idea of a transcendent master, he adds the required subjective element. By the same token he is also assured of the success of his effort at containing nature, for he realizes that the enjoyment of it, which he previously attributed to the master, actually belongs to him. It is for him, who has patiently worked on nature, not for the master, that nature ceases to be the alien power it proved to be for the contestants in the primordial battle of prestige.

But how does this transformation occur? How does the slave come to experience the fact that *he* is the master? Hegel says:

> Servitude has the lord for its essential reality…. For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread. In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundation. But this pure universal moment, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple essential nature of self-consciousness….
>
> 20

And later he adds:

> …[In work] the bondman's own negativity, his being-for-self, becomes an object for him only through his setting at nought the existing *shape* confronting him. But this objective *negative* moment is none other than the alien being before which he has trembled. Now, however, he destroys this alien negative moment, posits *himself* as a negative in the permanent order of things, and thereby becomes *for himself,* someone existing on his own account….21

After Kierkegaard and Sartre, we all recognize the dread Hegel describes in the first passage. It is the infinite terror we all feel prior to action, when freedom is for us still a play of infinite possibilities; and our natural being seems to us to liquefy and disappear from under us, for in the face of the possibilities opened up for us by freedom, none of its determinations can count as a sufficient motive of action. Hegel describes the experience accurately; he misplaces it, however, for he expects the slave to suffer it in the face of nature, whereas its real cause is the absurd desire to be all things at once, engendered by a freedom that is still abstract. This is the freedom

that belongs to the slave's master; and we should expect the slave to be gripped by dread only under pressure from him, as he desperately tries to escape from his master's ever new and unpredictable demands by hiding,

so to speak, in the particularities of natureonly to discover that hiding is in vain, for the eye of the master has no respect for the limits of nature. And if the slave succeeds, through the discipline of work, to make explicit the truth already implicit in his dread, that he is in fact the real master, as long as this newly acquired self-awareness is born to him out of his original experience in the face of the freedom of the external master, the freedom he now comes to possess is just as abstract as the freedom of the master was. For the original master held nature to be nothing, and the work of the slave does not alter this basic relationship; his work only spreads it out in an intricate system of particularized negative acts. Under pressure from the master, the slave is forced to delve into the details of nature; he learns how to withhold satisfaction of his natural desire in the face of each individual detail; in this sense, he seems to bestow upon his "negativity" an actual body. But, in fact, since nature for him continues to be a "nothingness," the only extra element he adds to the freedom of the external master is that of "control." Unlike the master, he now knows how to manipulate nature and make it serve his own transcendent abstract intentions; *qua* nature, however, he must still incorporate it into his freedom. If it should happen, therefore, that nature loses for him its "alien aspect," as Hegel claims in the second of the cited passages, this change takes place because the slave has learned to substitute for real nature the nature that is the object of his controlled reconstructions and to see only the latter even when he looks at the former. There is no guarantee, however, that the two correspond, or that real nature is not working behind the slave's back, so to speak, to undermine his dream that he can exist as a negative "in the permanent order of things."

Something else must be added to the slave before he becomes, not just a master, but a master who enjoys effective mastery over nature. Dread is the slave's experience of nature, mediated by the abstract freedom of the master. What he also needs is a direct confrontation with nature, an experience of it precisely *as nature.* But nature's strength lies in its being totally particularized. Before it one feels, not dread, but fearindividualized fear directed to clearly identifiable dangers. In this experience our being does not tend to melt and run away; it tends rather to solidify, and to drag us down irresistibly to one point in place and time. And if, at some point, the fear becomes generalized and turns into terror, this happens because

implicit in the original experience is the recognition that the presence of nature cuts off for us all avenues of escape from its real dangers by fleeing into the infinity of abstract freedom. Dread, for all its agonies, protects the slave from the realization that nature, even when it seems to liquefy and disappear, can never be really abstracted fromthat the

losses one suffers when one chooses to withhold the satisfaction of its desires, or when one is forced to, are losses that can never be made up for. The fear of nature removes from the slave precisely this illusion that dread engenders. It is the same fear, incidentally, that made a slave of one of the two warriors engaged in the original battle of prestige, and that made possible the transition from the ephemeral history of warfare to the real history of society. That fear was, and still is, the slave's salvation; he must now recover it in full by destroying the false image of freedom that the master holds out to him, and he runs the risk of interiorizing, just as he does in Hegel's account of his experience.

We now have the existential touchstone for the Hegelian triple mediation we have been looking for all along. No less than dread, fear of nature, too, is a passion of spirit; it presupposes that nature has acquired inferiority. But precisely as a mode of spiritual existence, it gives testimony to the fact that, with the birth of self-consciousness, nature has not been left behind; for in fear the impotence of nature is being acted out again in the form of impotence of spirit. The moment the slave understands the meaning of that fear, he also understands that to be spirit is still to be nature and only nature, but with the added freedom that the life of reason affords by allowing nature to appear and exist for its own sake. To contain nature as a master does is not to abstract from its state of dispersion, but to enjoy the freedom of being able to lose oneself in its endless details, knowing all along that any of them, provided it is sufficiently cared for, can be invested with infinite value. The countenance of the master loses its harshness only when the slave begins to recognize in his demands the objectivity of the logical idea. This objectivity is the ideal expression of a necessity that belongs in the first place to nature; but nature is in turn the starting point of a process that, in the form of life, first turns upon itself, and finally fructifies in the subjectivity of spirit. When the slave has learned this lesson, he can begin to attend to his natural needs with patience and compassion, learning both to suffer their limitation and enjoy their pleasure. It is, however, this natural life lived with freedom that we call history.

III

The conclusion we have reached might appear jejune after the long

preliminaries leading up to it. Notice, however, the difference that it would make for an understanding of Hegel if it were taken seriously. It would mean that Hegel, not Kant, is the real philosopher of finitude since he, not Kant, has really taught us how to live as free subjects while adhering strictly to the limits of nature. It is often said of Hegel

that he is the philosopher of the grand synthesisa synthesis for which his notion of the concrete universal is the ideal paradigm. This is trueprovided that the synthesis is not understood materially, as if it implied a summation of all human experience, but simply as a bringing together of the idea of reason and the idea of nature. Hegel's logic is a reflection on the operations of reason which, in clarifying the nature of these operations, gives us the added freedom of letting nature appear before us in all its contingency. For it is in that contingency, once it has been internalized, that the life of reason consists. In this sense, inasmuch as the function of the logical categories, like the function that Kant attributes to his concepts and ideas, is not to tell us what nature is, but to allow us to experience it objectivelyin this sense, Hegel's Logic is the true inheritor of Kant's Transcendental Logic. It *is,* in fact, Kant's Transcendental Logic, shorn however of the dogmatism and the formalism that vitiates the latter. The implication is that, while the philosopher can expect, according to Hegel, to find rationality in all aspects of experience, he should resist the temptation of defining it in a univocal sense, but should accept it in the fragmented form in which it emerges from the work of the scientist and the historian, or as the product of the various types of human praxis.

Hegel is not usually understood in this way, and with good reason; for in actual fact he shaped his system in the form of an encyclopedia; and, while in his Logic he ideally grants contingency speculative value,

22 when he comes to it as he develops *ex professo* the idea of nature, he tends to dismiss it as irrelevant to the philosopher and to treat nature itself as if it were structured like a sequence of ideas. And the figure of the Absolute that emerges at the end of the *Phenornenology* remains highly ambiguous: it might well turn out to be that of a transcendent God.

But we need not search far and wide in Hegel's system for instances in which he falls short of the insight enshrined in his idea of the triple mediation. His philosophy of history is in this respect the worst offender, for Hegel himself invites us to interpret it as a theodicy, as if it were a justification for the belief that history is controlled from beginning to end by a single intention.23 But nature is in fact much too dispersed to allow a

single plot to be made out of the many dealings man has had with it. His story is really a collection of many storiesheld together perhaps by the thread of some vague aspiration we might want to attribute to all men, but much more interesting, much more significant as instances of rationality, when they are told for the sake of their particularities.

Hegel's philosophy of history is bad philosophy because, as Croce pointed out,[24] it is first of all bad history. To preface Hegel's famous

Lectures with the slogan with which we began would be to show them for what they are: still a product of the spurious historiography of which the Enlightenment was so fond. That of all the works that come to us from Hegel this particular one should have been so influential, both for the left- and the right-wing traditions of Hegelian interpretation, is less an indictment of Hegelthe Enlightenment was, after all, his inheritanceas it is an indictment of the whole tradition of post-Hegelian thought.

Notes

1. Benedetto Croce, *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel,* in *Saggio sullo Hegel,* 4th ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1948), p. 114:"…E quella che vien chiamata *impotenza della natura,* ci si chiarisce come nient'altro che l'*impotenza della Filosofia della natura,* ideata da Schelling e da Hegel, a tener fede al suo proprio programma."

2. *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundisse* (1830), ed. F. Nicolin and O. Pögeller (Hamburg: Meiner, 1959), no. 250, *Zusatz); Hegel's Philosophy of Nature* tr. M. J. Petry, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970), 1:215.

3. *Wie der gemeine Menschenverstand die Philosophie nehmedargestellt an den Werken des Herrn Krug's,* ed. H. Buchner and O. Pöggeler, *Gesammelte Werke* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1968), 4: 174-87; especially pp. 17880.

4. Cf. Deiter Henrich, "Hegels Theorie fiber den Zufall," *Kant-Studien,* 50 (1958-9): 131-48 (p. 133).

5. The key text for the triple mediation is to be found in *Enzyklopädie,* no. 187 *Zusatz,* also nos. 574-7; *The Logic of Hegel, Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* tr. William Wallace, (1830), p. 322; William Wallace and A. V. Miller, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 313-5. I am greatly indebted for my understanding of Hegel's triple mediation to Emil L. Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), ch. 4, sects. 4-8.

6. Cf. Fackenheim's brief but brilliant treatment of the mediation of nature,

Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought, pp. 87-90.

7. Cf. *Enzyklopädie,* nos. 22, 23 and *Zusatz,* 24 and *Zusatz; Logic of Hegel,* pp. 43, 44-46.

8. Cf. *Enzyklopädie,* nos. 212, 213 and *Zusatz; Logic of Hegel,* pp. 351-3.

9. See the work of Otto Pöggeler on the development of Hegel's thought at Jena; e.g., "Hegels Jenaer Systemkonzeption," *Philosophisches Jahrbuch,* 71 (1963-4): 286-318; "Die Komposition der Ph/änomenologie des Geistes," *Hegel-Studien,* Beiheft 3 (Bonn, 1966), 27-74.

10. Croce, *Saggio suello Hegel,* pp. 114-26.

11. For a discussion of this theme, see George di Giovanni, "The Category of Contingency in the Hegelian Logic," in *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy,* ed. W. Steinkraus and K. Schmitz (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 179-200.

12. Cf. Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought,* pp. 112-4; pp. 111-2.

13. Cf. ibid., pp. 235-42.

14. "… Life points to something other than itself, viz., to consciousness, for which Life exists as this unity, or as genus…" *(Phänomenologie des Geistes,* ed. W. Bonsipien and R. Heede, *Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 9 [Hamburg: Meiner, 1980], p. 107); *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit,* tr., A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), p. 109. I am commenting on the first pages of ch. 4, pp. 103-109, English tr. pp. 104-111.

15. Cf. *Phänomenologie,* pp. 103-105, 108 (line 29 ff.), 109; *Phenomenology,* pp. 105-106, 110 (last paragraph), 111.

16. I. Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft, Kant's gesammelte Schriften,* hsg. Königlich Preussischen Akademie, vol. 5 (Berlin, 1908); cf. Introduction, sects. 5, 7, 9; and nos. 65, 66, 68, 75. Idem, *Critique of Judgment,* tr. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1951).

17. *Phänomenologie,* p. 111; *Phenomenology,* p. 113-4.

18. *Phänomenologie,* p. 112; *Phenomenology,* p. 114.

19. "…the Lord, who has interposed the bondsman between it [the thing] and himself, takes to himself only the dependent aspect of the thing and has the pure enjoyment of it. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who works on it." *Phänomenologie,* p. 113; *Phenomenology,* p. 115.

20. *Phänomenologie,* p. 114; *Phenomenology,* p. 117.

21. *Phänomenologie,* p. 115; *Phenomenology,* p. 118.

22. Cf. note 11 above.

23. *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte,* ed. G. Lasson, vol. 4, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Meiner, 1923), pp. 937-8. Cf.: "Das Streben unserer Tage ist die Würdigung der Vernunft, die Erkenntnis Gottes, dies, dass der Geist von sich weiss…" p. 937; "Der Geist ist nur, wozu er sich

macht; dazu ist es notwendig, dass er sich voraussetzt. Nur die Einsicht kann den Geist mit der Weltgeschichte and der Wirklichkeit versöhnen, dass das, was geschehen ist und alle Tage geschiet, nicht nur von Gott und nicht ohne Gott, sondern wesentlich das Werk Gottes selbst ist" p. 938.

24. Croce, *Saggio suello Hegel,* pp. 92-98.

Comment, by Thomas E. Wartenberg

The "impotence of nature" is a phrase Hegel uses to summarize his view of the limits to the rational cognition of nature. In the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* Hegel states:

> This is the *impotence* of nature, that it preserves the determinations of the notion only abstractly, and leaves their specification to external determination. (no. 250)

[1]

Nature is impotent because the notion does not fully determine the being of the things of nature. Contingency holds sway and puts a limit on how far rational cognition can succeed in regard to natural existents.

The "impotence of spirit" is a phrase George di Giovanni uses in his paper to encapsulate his view of how Hegel *ought* to have thought of history. Whereas Hegel saw history, according to di Giovanni, "as a Theodicy… controlled from beginning to end by a single intention," di Giovanni believes that Hegel ought to have adapted the lessons implied in the phrase "the impotence of nature" to the study of human society. The result would be a recognition that

> history is really a collection of many storiesheld together perhaps by the thread of some vague aspiration we might want to attribute to all men, but much more interesting, much more significant as instances of rationality, when they are told for the sake of their particularities (p. 209).

Di Giovanni's claim is that Hegel failed to heed the lessons of his own philosophy and attempted to push the project of rational compre-

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hension too far in regard to the study of history and human practice in general.

Di Giovanni's strategy, then, is to argue that the view encapsulated in the phrase "the impotence of nature" entails the acceptance of what he calls "the impotence of spirit." In my comments, I shall argue that there is no basis for this claim in Hegel. I will show that di Giovanni's argument proceeds by conflating the "impotence of nature" with a more general view of Hegel's concerning the relation between universal and particular. As a result, I shall argue that di Giovanni has not provided us with adequate grounds for revising our view of Hegel as the philosopher of grand systematic intent.

I

To begin, then, let us look more carefully at what Hegel means by the phrase, "the impotence of nature." We have seen that Hegel uses this phrase to claim that the being of things in nature is not fully determined by the notion or idea. There is a sort of leftover, an aspect of nature whose specific structure is not subject to rational explanation. Let us label this assertionthat nature exhibits determination by the notion only abstractlyas (IN).

From the beginning, let me acknowledge that di Giovanni's focus on (IN) allows us to see that Hegel is less the great rationalist than he is often taken to be. As di Giovanni says, we need to see that Hegel did acknowledge limits to reason's insights into the nature of things. In this sense, there are indeed more similarities between Kant and Hegel than are generally acknowledged.

[2] For both of these great systematic philosophers acknowledge that there are features of our existence that lie beyond the scope of reason.

In attempting to understand what Hegel means by (IN), we need to distinguish it from a more general claim that Hegel makes concerning the nature of philosophy as such. For Hegel, philosophy is the study of universals. It is the nature of such universals that Hegel seeks to unfold in his various explorations of human and physical nature. As he says in the

introduction to the *Logic,* “All things have a permanent inward nature, as well as an outward existence. They live and die, arise and pass away: but their essential and universal part is the kind” (*Encyclopedia,* no. 24 *Zusatz*). It is the presence of the universal in the actual that Hegel sees as philosophy’s task to reveal.

But this means that philosophy in general must not seek to comprehend every single aspect of the actual world as following from the nature of reason. We fail to acknowledge the distinction between the universal and its instances, if weas the infamous Herr Krug didask philosophy to account for the existence of particular instances.

According to Hegel, the element of philosophy is the universal.

> [I]ndividual empirical instances … may fare either well or badly, as the case may be, for the concept has authorized the forces of contingency and particularity to exercise their vast influence in the empirical sphere. But we are not concerned here with empirical details, they are at the mercy of chance, which has no place in the present discussion.
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> 3

What I want to stress is that this attitude toward particular individuals is characteristic of Hegel's philosophy in general. Particulars are beyond the ken of philosophical knowledge.

But if Hegel's philosophy in general is characterized by such an attitude toward the particular, (IN) cannot be a mere repetition of that view. After all, it is something about nature and its relation to the idea that Hegel wishes to capture in (IN).

Di Giovanni discusses the meaning of (IN) only briefly. He says that the phrase explains why the philosopher should not expect to capture all the details of nature in his/her conceptualization of it, and why the philosopher may therefore take the products of scientific reasoning to be his/her starting point (p. 196). But this is to take (IN) to be no more than a restatement of Hegel's general philosophical position and, as we have just seen, this won't do.

So let us turn to Hegel for a clearer sense of what he takes (IN) to claim. In the Remark to no. 250 of the *Encyclopedia,* Hegel discusses "the difficulty and, in many cases, the impossibility of finding fixed distinctions for classes and orders from an empirical consideration of nature." What this concern of Hegel's allows us to see is that Hegel is worried about the failure of nature to exhibit, in its individual existents, a strict adherence to the type of systematic order that a logical system demands. What he attempts to establish in (IN) is a dual claim: that nature does indeed exhibit enough regularity in its particular existents to allow us to affirm the presence of the notion in it, while still acknowledging that this presence does not fully determine the existence of nature's products.

What I am claiming, then, is that (IN) is a specific claim about how

empirical objects in nature fit into classes. Although it denies that nature will exhibit a perfect coherence with the structure of a logical system in all of its particular products, it does so in order to establish the validity of this systematic structure as a description of nature in general. By acknowledging nature's impotence, Hegel intends to validate its overall systematicality.

In order to bolster my interpretation of (IN), let me mention two things. The first comes from Hegel himself. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Spirit,* the third part of the *Encyclopedia,* Hegel comments

on one difference between the study of spirit and the study of nature:

> The 'concrete' nature of spirit involves for the observer the peculiar difficulty that the several grades and special types which develop its intelligible unity in detail are not left standing as so many separate existences confronting its more advanced aspects. It is otherwise in external nature (*Encyclopedia* no. 380).

One result of this contrast is to explain that the life of spirit exhibits a greater conformity to the generic structure that the philosopher is able to uncover because there are no "separate existences" that need to be determined by the notion. Rather, Hegel claims, it is only a particular manner of existing that is at issue. This contrast makes sense only if we see (IN) as concerned with the relation of particular existents to universal concepts.

The second confirmation of my view of (IN) comes from Kant. In the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* entitled the "Regulative Employment of the Ideas of Pure Reason," Kant brings up a similar problem. Kant's worry there is that the empirical concepts that we use to describe particular things in nature will not exhibit the form of a logical system. He attempts to show that we do have transcendental grounds for assuming that nature will exhibit systematicality. Without going into the details of Kant's account,

[4] I want to point out that my interpretation of (IN) places Hegel's concern in a direct relation to that of Kant. Although they differ on the extent to which philosophy is able to deduce these universals, both Kant and Hegel are concerned to establish the basic systematic structure of nature.

Now that we have seen what the meaning of (IN) is, we can see why di Giovanni cannot use it as a means to establish his view that, although the "philosopher can expect … to find rationality in all aspects of experience, he [or she] should resist the temptation of defining it in a univocal sense, but should accept it in the fragmented form in which it emerges from the work of the scientist and the historian, or as the product of the various types of human praxis" (p. 209). (IN) is a specific claim about the relation of generic concepts or universals to particulars. It cannot support the sort of interpretation that di Giovanni gives it.

Di Giovanni seems to think that (IN) entails the denial of another principle (SN). This principle, also articulated by Hegel in the introductory sections of the *Philosophy of Nature,* states that "Nature is to be regarded as a *system of stages,* one arising necessarily from the other and being the proximate truth of the stage from which it results." *(Encyclopedia,* no. 249). It is di Giovanni's belief in this entailment that leads him to attempt to show that a faithful adherence to (IN) when applied to all areas of human endeavor will result in a transformation

of the Hegelian attitude toward those areas.

Not only is this not the case, but the fact of the matter is that Hegel introduces (IN) as a means for establishing (SN). Let us recall that one problem Hegel is attempting to solve through the use of (IN) is why the existence of "monstrosities" does not do violence to the validity of a genus-species classificatory system. By introducing (IN), Hegel is telling us to regard nature with a bit of toleration. Like any mother, she doesn't have total control of her offspring. But the misbehavior of those particular individuals need not affect our faith in the basic principle of nature's structure, (SN).

My own feeling is that di Giovanni's failure to see how (IN) works in regard to (SN) is due to the fact that he has inadequately distinguished (IN) from Hegel's general attitude toward empirical instances. Hegel's concern is with the universal, as I have said. This is true for both nature and spirit. And Hegel does not see that it conflicts with his systematic aim. If di Giovanni has reasons for saying that it does, then I simply fail to see them.

There is, however, one specific claim that I do think we can make against Hegel, based on di Giovanni's attack, namely that Hegel has no justification for viewing history, and hence society, as more neatly fitting a systematic structure than do natural existences. There can be societies or stages in history that are "monstrosities" in the sense that they seem to deny the general patterns of historical development. But this fact would not affect the general validity of Hegel's model of history.

III

The central concern of my paper has been to argue that di Giovanni's attempt to find in Hegel the principle of his own *Aufhebung* is misguided. The systematic nature of Hegel's philosophy is not some accidental result of an oversight on his part when it came to presenting the nature of his views of human experience to the public. Hegel's concern is, from the beginning, to present an account of existence that makes it intelligible as a totality. And while concern for this goal of Hegel's may cause interpreters to overlook his affirmation of the limits of reason, di Giovanni's attempt to

see Hegel as “the philosopher of human finitude” is simply going too far in the other direction.

Let me conclude by noting that I have not attempted in these brief remarks to defend Hegel’s view of reality as systematic, but merely to show what they are and why di Giovanni’s attempt to find a contradiction between Hegel’s basic attitude and the form of his system is misguided. This is not to say that I am denying that there may

be good reasons to reject Hegel's attempt to cognize the systematic structure of reality. All I have meant to do here is to argue that if one wishes to stand Hegel on his head, then one needs to do just thatand not argue that, if we just look carefully enough, we'll see that he's been standing that way all along.

Notes

1. References to the *Encyclopedia* are to *The Encyclopedia of the Philosophic Sciences,* available in English as:

(i) The *Logic of Hegel,* tr. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

(ii) *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature,* tr. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

(iii) *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind,* tr. W. Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

2. For another attempt to show the role of contingency in Hegel's philosophy, see D. Henrich, "Hegels Theorie Uber den Zufall," in *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1967), pp. 157-86.

3. *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* tr. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 66.

4. For a detailed examination of Kant's view, see my "Order through Reason: Kant's Transcendental Justification of Science," *Kant-Studien,* vol. 4, (1979), pp. 409-424.

Chapter Ten
Hegel's Challenge to the Modern Economy

Richard Dien Winfield

Economic Relations as a Problem of Social Justice

Throughout all the major upheavals of modem times economic relations have been treated as vital matters of social justice to which politics cannot be indifferent. Although little agreement has been reached over what these relations ought to be, the proper order of the economy has everywhere become a contested issue of public affairs.

1 Nevertheless, the premise that economic relations are normative social structures to which citizens must attend if they are to live in justice has not found general acceptance in modem theory. On the contrary, a great many modem thinkers have rejected the idea that economic relations are social in character and denied that they have any normative content at all. Instead of granting the economy the status of a sphere of social justice involving its own relations of right, they have conceived economic activity as either a natural function or a monological affair involving the single self.

The natural account of economic relations views them as a metabolism between man and nature, comprising an ineluctable feature of the human condition. On this basis, the economy is construed as a sphere of necessity, lying outside all considerations of right and wrong. With its relations given by nature rather than determined by the free volition of its participants, it comprises a domain for which

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no actions are responsible and in which no questions of justice can arise.

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The monological account, for its part, arrives at the same consequences by determining economic relations through some function of the self. This can involve a psychological principle, as in marginal utility theory, where the values of commodities are determined by estimates of psychological desire. Alternately, it can entail conceiving economic activity as a technical process, where a single agency acts upon objects according to causal laws. This technical framework can be restricted to production, rendering it a process whereby a laboring self uses an instrument to impose some new form upon a given material, or it can be equally extended to distribution, making it a unilateral assignment of goods to consumers who are treated as ordered objects as well. Either way, the economic relations concerned are deprived of any normative content, for all they involve are relations between a self and objects, rather than relations between individuals wherein justice can enter.3

This common outcome of the natural and monological conceptions of economics was, of course, already perceived by the classical representatives of practical philosophy. Aristotle, for one, well recognized that if economic relations were understood to consist in *techne* and *poiesis,* that is, in instrumental action and making, then they could not involve the just activity of *praxis.* So construed, economic activity would not be performed for its own sake as universally valid conduct, but for resultant products and satisfactions that would themselves be predicated upon purely particular needs rooted in either nature or arbitrary appetite.4 Kant, on the other hand, observed that if economics concerned a technical working upon nature in response to psychologically determined needs, and not normative relations between autonomous selves, then it would have to be excluded from practical theory and relegated to a positive science applying causal rules of the understanding to an empirical subject matter.5

What these conclusions underline is how, contrary to the common concern of modern practice, the natural and monological conceptions both rule out

any normative significance for economic activity by determining it independently of the relations between individuals, which are specific to their plurality and enacted through their willing. The natural and monological theories therefore can offer no critique of existing relations, for they address their subject matter as something consisting in relations of nature and the self that no common action can alter. Accordingly, if their concepts were not to correspond to the reality they putatively describe, what would warrant change would be their theoretical construct.

If, however, economic activity is not reducible to natural or mon-

ological functions, but can comprise normative social relations, then a prescriptive, rather than a descriptive economic science is called for, an economics that falls within the theory of justice and that can call into question the legitimacy of the existing order of the economy. In that case, if the economy does not accord with the concept of just economic relations, what should be altered is not theory, but economic reality. This possibility, which has been effectively assumed by the makers of modern history, presents imposing theoretical challenges.

First, if economic relations are to be social, they must not be constitutively determined independently of society. This requires that economic relations not be specified in terms of either natural or monological relations, which by definition have no social content. It further entails that economic relations not be characterized as belonging to some normative sphere other than society, such as the household or the state. If economic activity be relegated to their domains, then the economic order ceases to be a social question. What these requirements mean in positive terms is that economic relations must have their entire character accounted for through what is involved in social relations alone.

If, however, the economy is to have a *normative* social being realizable through political action, then the reality of justice must be shown to incorporate a sphere of society distinct from such other structures as property relations, morality, the family and the state. Then, it must further be demonstrated that the specifically social bonds of that sphere do accomodate economic need and the activities securing its satisfaction.

Hegel's Mandate for Prescriptive Economics

The figure in the history of thought who has most seriously addressed these challenges and attempted to conceive economic relations as proper matters of social justice is Hegel. In his discussion of the "System of Needs," in the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel draws economic relations into the realm of fight and undertakes to develop the normative economics that can determine what economy the just society should have.

In taking this step, Hegel is hardly the first to consider the economy as a sphere of justice. Political economy, classically represented by Adam

Smith, had already sought to conceive the wealth of nations as a system of economic relations distinguishing proper civilized society from the unjust life of savages.

6 Indeed, Hegel introduces his own treatment of economic relations by praising the political economists for succeeding in using their understanding to discover laws of motion within the vast array of economic activity before them.7

Employing the understanding to describe the lawful motion of an observed economy is, however, an entirely different enterprise from using reason to conceive what order the economy should have. Although Hegel is willing to acknowledge the descriptive accomplishments of the political economists, his prescriptive economics is radically different from theirs.

Unlike Smith, Steuart, and Ricardo, Hegel is concerned with conceiving a strictly social rather than political economy. This reflects his understanding that normative economic relations can be neither natural, nor monological, nor political, but must belong within a civil society. It is certainly true that political economy also situates economic relations within what is called a civil society. However, its civil society is such that the economic relations falling within it are equally natural, monological, and political in character. This is due to the fact that political economy operates within the framework of the liberal theory of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau. For liberal theory, just public life consists in a civil order whose society and state have the common end of realizing a liberty whose content derives from the capacity natural to the self of choosing freely among given alternatives. Here civil society figures as a sphere of justice in which individuals enjoy the naturally grounded liberty to own and dispose of property and pursue their particular interests under the regulation and protection of a government limited to securing that liberty's harmonious exercise. Political economy adopts this characterization of civil society and its concomitant reduction of politics to civil government by conceiving economic relations as features of a society whose pursuit of particular interest is equally the end to which government is subordinated.

8 Since politics here consists in protecting the same liberty at play in the market relations of this civil society, the economy can be called political. Furthermore, because individuals participate in this "political economy" by exercising the natural liberty to pursue particular ends of one's own choosing, the society of the economy is composed of action both natural and monological in character. Thus, however much political economy wishes to sanction the economy as a normative sphere setting off civilized society from savagery, it undermines the justice of economic activity by deriving its structures from normatively neutral relations of man and nature.

Hegel, on the contrary, holds that, if economic relations are to be matters of justice falling within a civil society, then both they and that society must consist entirely in nonnatural, intersubjective structures of freedom. What leads Hegel to make this decisive break with the natural and monological aspects of political economy is the dual insight underlying his entire *Philosophy of Right.* By working through the dilemmas in traditional practical philosophy, Hegel comes to re-

alize that (1) justice must have no foundations, and that (2) justice can have this foundation-free character only if it consists in the reality of freedom whose own structures are determined by free willing rather than by any independent factors, such as natural law or the given nature of the self. Hegel arrives at these conclusions by taking to its radical consequences the common truism that justice involves only what lies within the power of voluntary action and not what occurs independently by nature. Although this means that what ought to be is only through convention rather than natural neccessity, Hegel recognizes that the distinction between 'ought' and 'is' prohibits given convention from automatically providing the content of justice.

9 Although justice may exist only by convention, convention is just only if its own relations are such that they ought to hold irrespective of what simply is.10

Hegel reasons that, since given convention cannot prescribe what is just, the relations of justice must be in their entirety both universal and unconditioned: universal, insofar as they must hold valid for every particular situation, and unconditioned, insofar as they cannot be relative to any condition lying outside justice. This does not mean that justice loses the particularity of content that has been recognized ever since Aristotle to be basic to action. It rather signifies that the only particular factors which can legitimately affect a relation of justice are other relations of justice, whose own right to enter in can follow alone from justice itself. Otherwise, justice would be bound to independently given factors, leaving it no more justifiable than any other convention of ordered behavior. Accordingly, justice itself conditions and particularizes its own relations, which is precisely what allows them to be universal and unconditioned with regard to what lies outside them. Only by being determined through itself can justice escape the hold of givenness and achieve its own constitutive unconditioned universality. Accordingly, Hegel concludes, justice can have no foundations, for it must be its own ground and standard. Consequently, the theory of justice, including any prescriptive economics, must not derive the relations of justice from prior principles or procedures of construction.

Furthermore, Hegel argues, justice must consist in enacted relations of freedom among individuals, for only an entirely self-determined convention can satisfy the foundation-free requirements of normativity. Therefore, the theory of justice is not a theory of the Good, but the theory of right to the degree that fight designates, as Hegel indicates, nothing but the reality of freedom.[11] If this is so, then a prescriptive economics is properly a theory of economic fight devoted to conceiving that economic order which consists entirely in structures of freedom.

When Hegel proceeds to develop the theory of justice as a theory of the reality of freedom, he does follow the lead of liberal theory, which first made the freedom of liberty the basis of justice, in place of the prescribed norms of virtue. Nevertheless, Hegel radically departs from the liberal path by recognizing that the freedom of justice can neither be conceived as liberty, nor as a prior principle of justice.

Whereas just action cannot be determined by exogenous factors, liberty is afflicted with a heteronomy involving not only the content of its ends, as Kant critically observed, but also its form. Rather than being determined by the will itself, liberty's own form of choice derives from the given nature of the self, just as its ends are chosen from among alternatives independently supplied by outer circumstance or separate inner faculties of desire and reason. As a result of this dual bondage to givenness, liberty lacks the unconditioned universality justice requires. Furthermore, when the naturally defined liberty is made the principle from which the institutions of justice are derived, through such procedures as the social contract, liberty becomes the determining ground of justice. This undermines the identity of freedom and justice by robbing the latter of the foundation-free, self-determined character it requires.

For these reasons, the economic freedom that prescriptive economics must address cannot be founded on the exercise of liberty, so dear to political economy.

The normative inadequacy of liberty indicates to Hegel that justice must, instead, be sought in a freedom whose form and content are both exclusively determined by willing, and whose self-determination is concrete enough to comprise the entire reality of justice. Although Hegel does not deny that the choosing will of liberty is a capacity all individuals possess as part of the nature of their selves,

12 he argues that the freedom of justice must involve an artificial agency that acts in terms of a normative framework that its own willing brings into being. Only then can the structure of willing, and all the particulars of its action, be truly self-determined and coincide with the enacted order of justice.

What leads Hegel to the positive conception of justice containing his prescriptive economics is his recognition that the will can exercise the mandated freedom of justice only by interacting with other wills, and not by acting upon nature or its own self. So long as the will restricts itself to technical or some other monological activity, the parameters of its action remain defined by factors of nature and the self, which are no more products of willing than structures of justice. If, however, individuals act toward one another so that how and what they will is determined solely in reciprocity with how and what others will, they will all exercise an autonomy whose specific character com-

pletely derives from their freely entered relationship. In such a mutual interaction, the content of their willing is not supplied by independently given factors, but rather by ends whose particular differences are specific to the relation between individuals comprised by their concomitant actions. This relationship is not something imposed upon them, leaving how and what they will ordained by a structure they have not willed into being. On the contrary, this relationship is their serf-determination, for each participant wills his relation to the others through an act of his choice, which nevertheless can proceed only in virtue of these others willing that same relation through their own voluntary action. Hegel appropriately calls the interaction of freedom a reciprocal recognition process, insofar as within its enacted structure each individual wills his own end and relation to others by respecting the serf-determinations which they will as part of the same relationship.

13 He further observes that such freedom is itself a relation of justice, for not only is it wholly serf-grounded, but the complementary serf-determinations comprising it proceed in a conjunction of right and duty giving each normativeness. Due to the reciprocity of the interaction, each act is an exercise of right and duty, both enjoying the respect the others afford through their concordant actions and showing respect for their serf-determinations by not violating their respective limits. Accordingly, each participant here exercises an *objective* freedom, whose very form of mutual respect provides an intersubjective validity assuring its reality.14

Although the right and duty of objective freedom thus make it an existing structure of justice, rather than a regulative ideal, Hegel is well aware that the unity of justice and freedom requires that freedom not consist in a single relation of interaction, incapable of containing all the different institutions of right.15 The reality of freedom must rather comprise a system of interactions incorporating all institutions of justice. Furthermore, if the serf-grounded character of justice is not to be violated, then the unity of this system must be imposed from within by a particular structure of interaction whose freedom unites and orders the whole as a serf-ordered system. Hegel recognizes that the freedom of civil society cannot play this role, insofar as

social action confines itself to addressing particular interests and welfare and never engages in determining the total structure of justice as the end of its activity. What does, however, constitutively attend to ordering the whole framework of right, of which it is a part, is politics. Therefore, Hegel reasons, the system of right must be crowned by a sovereign state institutionalizing a political freedom that determines the whole by ruling over all the other spheres of right so that their respective freedoms are secured in unity with its own serf-governing activity. Only when politics achieves this pre-eminence can the entire

reality of justice ground itself and enjoy unconditioned universality. If, on the contrary, the state collapses public freedom with free enterprise, or reduces government to management of the public welfare, or champions proletarian interest so as to cause itself to wither away, politics becomes an instrument of independently given nonpolitical ends, instead of the self-ordering interaction whose rule allows right to rest on its own freedom.

Because justice, however, must have a sovereign political unity, politics must be for its own sake, which can only occur if no other institutions of right challenge its supremacy. This means that no economic order can be just which acts as the determining base of a political superstructure. More generally, it signifies that all the nonpolitical structures of right must be determined, both in their own integrity as specific modes of freedom, and as subordinate institutions incorporated with the free state. These dual considerations provide the basic mandate for Hegel's prescriptive economics. Given the project of the *Philosophy of Right,* the question of what the economy should be can only be answered by determining the economic order that is a structure of freedom and by establishing the relation it has to the free state, as well as to the other institutions of freedom over which politics holds sway. Since Hegel locates the just economy within civil society, his normative economics must be evaluated by examining: (1) how civil society figures as a normative sphere of freedom, (2) why just economic relations consist in the freedom specific to civil society, (3) whether Hegel has properly developed them in these terms, (4) how the justice of the economy relates to other civil institutions, and, finally, (5) how the just economy stands under the rule of self-government.

The Legitimacy of Civil Society and the Civil Character of Economic Freedom

If Hegel's prescriptive economics is to have legitimacy as a normative science of a social rather than a political economy, the justice of freedom must be shown to require a civil society containing economic relations. In the *Philosophy of Right,* Hegel addresses this task in the course of arguing that right has its exhaustive reality in the interactions of freedom of persons and property, morality, the family, civil society, and the state. Hegel conceives civil society after property relations, morality, and the family, but

before the state, for two important reasons. First, although Hegel's civil society is not determined by any natural liberty, it consists of relations between individuals who do already interact as persons, moral subjects, and family members, without, however, pursuing their civil relations in terms of any

political involvement. Consequently, civil society can only be conceived if the concepts of personhood, morality, and the family already lie at hand. Second, in Hegel's view, the just state cannot exist without civil freedom, with all the social institutions that comprise its exercise. Thus, if civil society is to have any justification, it must provide a mode of freedom presupposed by politics, which neither property, nor moral, nor household relations can supply.

What satisfies this requirement, giving civil society its mandate, is the freedom to realize particular ends of one's own choosing in reciprocity with others. This right is something lacking in property relations, morality, and the household, even though it can only be exercised by individuals enjoying the rights of persons, moral subjects, and adult family members. Indeed, personhood is a prerequisite for all further freedoms, since without possession of one's own body, there is no way one's actions can be recognized as one's own. Nevertheless, as Hegel points out,

16 owning property does not realize an individual's particular ends in reciprocity with others, for the property-holding will of the person has no particular end lying in itself, but first acquires determination by embodying itself in some external entity. Similarly, although morality underlies all ethical institutions by making individuals responsible for realizing right through their own actions, the end of moral action is not the mutual realization of particular interests, but whatever conscience determines to be just. In contrast, the household does provide an existing association whose members enjoy the right and duty of acting for its common good. However, although this gives them a private realm on whose basis they are free to enter society, the family unity is destroyed if its own members interact within the household in terms of independent interests.

If this indicates that the freedom of interests requires more than property, moral, and household relations for its realization, what makes necessary a separate civil sphere devoted to its exercise is the role of such freedom as a precondition of free politics. As Hegel suggests,17 if the state were to allow for no civil society to realize the reciprocal pursuit of individual interests, state rule would stand in irreconcilable opposition to the interests of its

citizens. Instead of securing the totality of freedom, the state would then exclude a whole dimension of their autonomy and so forfeit its own legitimacy. Therefore, Hegel concludes, there ought to be a civil society to provide the sphere of freedom for the reciprocal realization of independent interests.

Although this line of argument points to the legitimacy of a civil society, it tells neither what civil society actually is, nor how economic relations fall within it. Rather, it raises the question of what institu-

tions can realize interest as a fight and make ”civil society” more than a wishful slogan.

As Hegel discovers, the immediate answer to this question establishes prescriptive economics as a science of a social economy, for what provide the minimal institution of freedom in which interests are reciprocally realized are none other than commodity relations. Hegel comes to this insight by thinking through the basic mandate of civil society, not as naturally construed by liberal theory and political economy, nor as conditioned by some historical necessity, but in accord with the foundation-free requirements of justice.

On these terms, the task of civil society consists in providing the institutions allowing individuals to realize their interests through a normative interaction of freedom, rather than in an exercise of natural liberty, where all pursue whatever ends they choose without any mutual recognition of right. Hegel recognizes that if civil society is to save the pursuit of interest from an *omnium bella omnium,* that pursuit must somehow be so determined that each individual can achieve his freely chosen ends only be realizing and respecting the similar pursuit of others. In that case, action toward others for particular ends of one’s own choosing will be a matter of justice, for it will proceed as part of a mutual observance of fight and duty where each interacting participant determines himself in view of his own interest with the agreement of the others by simultaneously honoring their concordant exercise of that same freedom. Such an interaction will thus allow for a normative community of interest in which the free realization of each member’s particular ends figures as a fight that all are duty-bound to respect to the degree that only in so doing can they engage in their own respected pursuit of interest.

Participation in this minimal relationship to civil freedom, accordingly, consists in willing particular ends of one’s own choosing where those ends are attainable only by action toward others entailing the concomitant fulfillment of their respective ends. For this to be so, these ends must be independently pursued interests that their bearer cannot realize with what nature directly provides, what already lies within that individual’s household and private property, or what others may furnish without thereby

realizing an interest of their own. If the pursuit of interest is to be a normative civil interaction, the interests at stake must, instead, require something that can only be supplied by other individuals who can do so themselves only by voluntarily obtaining in return what satisfies their own chosen ends.

Hegel's entire prescriptive social economics proceeds from his insight that the particular ends meeting these requirements of civil justice consist in needs whose content is completely a matter of personal preference, yet which can only be satisfied by what someone

else has to offer under the condition that the bearer of the first need possess and agree to offer in return something satisfying a similarly advanced need of the latter. Hegel recognizes that such need can be determined neither naturally, as a physical want for what the body requires, nor monologically, as a psychological yearning for what the soul may desire. Although, as Hegel grants in his discussion of the right of distress *(Notrecht),*

18 every person has a right to satisfy his subsistence needs, insofar as the maintenance of life is a precondition for any exercise of freedom, that maintenance does not comprise the specific justice of civil freedom, where what further achieves legitimacy are reciprocally realized interests free of any natural limit. The same is true for psychological needs, whose satisfaction may be a precondition for the sanity required to interact as a recognized person, but whose content cannot prescribe what can figure as a need in civil interaction.

Accordingly, Hegel understands that what does characterize civil need is its being directed upon means of satisfaction that can only be obtained from correlatively needy individuals. Although the particular content of such need is a matter of personal preference, and may well coincide with some physical or psychological wants, what makes it an object of civil right is that it is pursued in reciprocity with the needs of others. Only this social relatedness, consisting in the correlative pursuit of interest of a plurality of individuals, can mandate what figures as a need within the normative relations of civil freedom.19

Consequently, what comprise the exclusive objects satisfying need that is civil in character are *commodities,* goods expressly owned by other individuals who are willing to exchange them to satisfy their own correlatively determined wants. Only within a context of a plurality of commodity owners, can need enjoy the legitimacy of being the particular end pursued within the reciprocal relation of civil freedom. Conversely, only within the interaction of individuals who need what others have and have what others need, can property function as a commodity, related not only to the will of its owner, but to the civil need of others with commodities of their Own. This signifies that the needs at play in the

minimal interaction satisfying the mandate for civil society are economic needs in the specific normative sense of needs for commodities, needs which, by that very character, can only be satisfied in reciprocity with the analogous needs of others.

Hegel therefore concludes that civil society directly entails a system of needs comprising a market economy of commodity relations. This social economy is the institution providing the freedom of particularity with its basic reality, and for this reason, it commands the normativeness making it the subject matter of prescriptive economics. If this

reveals why Hegel addresses what the economy ought to be by conceiving a social economy of commodity relations forming the basic institution of civil society, it leaves open whether Hegel has adequately developed the system of needs as the elementary structure of civil freedom.

Key Matters of Debate in Hegel's System of Needs

Hegel's account of the internal structure of the system of needs is marked by four overriding features that are of as much importance for determining social and political justice as a whole as they are for prescribing the just economy.

In the first place, Hegel conceives commodity relations as legitimate interractions of freedom proper to civil society. Second, he works out their total structure without subsuming them under a system of capitals whose profit derives from wage labor commodity production.

20 Third, while Hegel grants legitimacy to commodity relations, he nonetheless argues that they cannot secure for every individual the actual exercise of the very right they alone make possible, namely, the respected freedom to satisfy needs of one's own choosing in reciprocity with others. Fourth, Hegel conceives classes as necessary elements of the just economy, but characterizes them in terms more appropriate to estates.21

The significance of the first two features is set in relief by Marx's5 critique of commodity relations and of the civil society that rests upon them. In contrast to Hegel, Marx rejects the legitimacy of commodity relations, and with them, civil society, because he considers them to be bound up with capitalism, which he judges to be a nonnormative historical formation resting on the exploitation of labor and subjecting society and politics to bourgeois rule in the interest of capital. As a consequence, Marx analyzes commodity relations not in a prescriptive economics, but in a descriptive theory of capital. There he determines them as relations swallowed up within the accumulation process of capital that comprises not the elementary structure of a normative civil society, but the determining base of an historically given bourgeois society whose overthrow is a necessary prelude to the realization of justice.

If Hegel's prescriptive economics is to have any validity, Marx's critique of commodity relations must be refuted by showing that the system of needs is indeed a structure of freedom, not only irreducible to capital, but containing none of the bonds of domination that Marx ascribes to it. Such a refutation will equally demonstrate that civil society is not a bourgeois society in Marx's perjorative sense.

Freeing the system of needs from the taint of "capitalist exploita-

tion" will not, however, exonerate the unbridled free enterprise of the market, if the third feature of Hegel's account is justified. Hegel's idea that commodity relations cannot automatically realize the freedom in whose exercise they consist contradicts the classic view of political economy that the market orders itself with an invisible hand insuring the welfare of all. If, on the contrary, Hegel's argument can be shown to be valid, it will mandate the addition of further institutions of freedom to resolve the problem of social justice that the market introduces.

22

Finally, Hegel's justification and depiction of a class society rooted in the system of needs has derisive significance, both for his own conception of the just society and state, and for justice today. If it can be shown that Hegel's estate characterization of social classes does not result from the economic dynamic of commodity relations, this will entail major reworkings of Hegel's class division as well as of his conceptions of the corporations and the state, which both rest heavily upon estate relations.

All these issues can only be resolved by turning to the internal structure of the system of needs, as presented by Hegel and as re-thought where necessary to give justice its due.

Capital and the Legitimacy of Commodity Relations

Hegel appropriately begins his account of the system of needs with the most elementary relationship of need and the means of its satisfaction, allowing for the reciprocal realization of self-interest that civil society requires. This consists in nothing other than a market in which a plurality of individuals face one another simultaneously as bearers of personally chosen needs for the commodities of others, and as owners of some commodity that others similarly need. This dual relationship forms the starting point of all further normative market relations because an individual can participate in this society of interest only by both choosing to need a commodity belonging to someone else and owning a good which that other individual needs.[23]

It is here, then, that Hegel's prescriptive economics must begin to establish

the structure and legitimacy of commodity relations. The first step in this direction is provided by Hegel's argument in paragraphs 190 and 191 of the *Philosophy of Right,* that both the needs and commodities comprising the correlative elements of market interaction stand in an artifical multitude and diversity, which may indeed incorporate certain naturally given wants and objects as well as conform to the possibilities of material reality, but which nevertheless cannot be prescribed by any natural principles. Unlike political economists and Marx who have tended to view economic need and use

value as anthropological factors of the human condition,

24 Hegel recognizes that the utility sought by civil need is as social as the want it addresses. Both have their specific character solely in terms of the just convention of the reciprocal realization of particular ends, which utility can enter into only by being borne by commodities satisfying not the wants of human nature, but the specifically social need of individuals who have a commodity of their own to exchange. On the basis of this enacted structure of interaction, the variety and plenitude of utilities is no more restricted by the given requirements of life than that of the needs individuals choose to have and realize in reciprocity with others. Because both need and its object are matters of preference, limited only by what others concomitantly choose to need and own, the possible refinement and number of either is as measureless as it is capricious.25

This aspect of the multiplication and discrimination of needs and commodities is of central importance to social justice and the legitimacy of commodity relations. In effect, it establishes a whole new domain of right by liberating need from the set bounds of natural subsistence and reconstituting it as a civil need as unlimited in magnitude and variety as the commodities required to satisfy it. Since the content of need is here determined by how commodity owners freely interact, rather than by the physical requirements of individuals and the natural scarcity of those things that satisfy bodily wants, the need for commodities is itself a factor of freedom, enjoying the normative-ness common to self-determination. Consequently, with commodity relations, the right of need to be satisfied is no longer restricted to what a person requires to exist and act toward others. Because satisfying the need for commodities realizes the freedom of interest in a relationship of right and duty, the justice of that freedom extends to whatever needs figure within it.

This immediately makes social justice a problem of much more formidable challenge than that of securing everyone’s person and property. Due to the unavoidable multiplication and refinement of needs and commodities, what must be treated as a civil right of each individual is the reciprocal satisfaction of an endlessly multifarious and discriminating neediness, the

means of satisfaction of which are all already owned by others in an equally unnatural plenitude and variety. Although each individual here has the opportunity to choose from a mass of luxury beyond all physical requirement, he does so in a dependent poverty without end, for as Hegel notes, not only is his own need without limit, but it can only be satisfied by what others own and willingly relinquish for something satisfying their own needs.[26] Consequently, to realize the right of satisfying civil need, one does not confront the obstacle of nature's niggardliness, which

technical activity can overcome, but rather the barrier of entitled commodity ownership, which may be violated by theft, but which can only be removed in conformity with civil reciprocity through the free consent of the owner. The unsatisfied need for commodities therefore comprises the socially specific poverty of a boundless want for an artificial plethora of goods justly unattainable without a commodity of one's own that others want in return.

If this civil predicament makes the continuance of such poverty a social wrong, it also mandates how it can be righted: given a market of needy commodity owners, the only way they can obtain what they need in a mutual exercise of freedom is by entering into commodity exchange with one another. Accordingly, the basic interaction realizing the community of interest of civil society is the freely entered relation of commodity exchange, wherein individuals acquire a good they need from someone else by voluntarily giving in return a commodity of their own which that other individual needs. Having identified the factors that form the components of this relation, Hegel's prescriptive economics appropriately proceeds to consider the exchange process itself and what is entailed in its operation.

The decisive point which Hegel's argument here establishes is that within the mutual relationship of exchange, the traded commodities acquire a further social quality consisting in the equivalence in exchangeability of one good for the other as realized in their actual exchange.

27 Although Hegel does not give this quality a name of its own, distinguishing it from the social utility or use value that each commodity bears as the object of a certain civil need, what he is addressing is exchange value, the equivalent exchangeability of two traded commodities. It is of crucial importance that Hegel recognizes that this quality is something neither intrinsic to the natural qualities of the exchanged commodities, nor rooted in a psychological estimation of them, nor determined by anything preceding the mutually agreed exchange act setting them in their actual relation of equivalence. The voluntary bilateral character of commodity exchange requires that this be so, since what makes two commodities exchangeable is the concurring decisions of their respective owners, who, being independent individuals in the market, need not be swayed by any

particular external factors, nor conform to any stipulated model of "economic rationality." The only constraint they face is the necessity of reaching agreement with other commodity owners, who themselves act under the same condition of having to accomodate the needs of others in order to satisfy their own.

This means that any market situation in which goods are traded at proportions fixed independently of the choices of the parties to exchange would violate the constitutive freedom of commodity relations

and represent a social injustice, *unless* it occurred out of consideration for matters of right, such as political sovereignty or public welfare, having priority over particular exercises of market freedom, but not entailing their complete annulment.

Accordingly, any labor theory of value that determines the exchange values of commodities by the conditions of their production misconstrues commodity relations by ignoring that every commodity exchange is determined by the free, mutual agreement of the exchange partners. It is precisely this reciprocal freedom, constitutive of commodity exchange, that makes it possible for nonproduced items, such as labor power and land, to have exchange value as much as any product, so long as some individual agrees to trade another commodity for them.

28 Consequently, when prescriptive economics turns to exchange value as it arises in commodity exchange, what it addresses is a relation of commodities in general, rather than something specific to the particular class of commodities comprising products. Hegel understands this, and therefore properly analyzes commodity exchange prior to, and independently of, his consideration of commodity production.

Admittedly, when Hegel subsequently discusses the labor process entailed by the market, he does speak of labor's impressing its product with value.29 However, Hegel does not thereby fall into the trap of the labor theory of value, for he nowhere claims that labor's act sets the exchange value at which its products are actually bought and sold, or for that matter, furnishes surplus value that appears in transformed form as profit. Hegel's reference to labor's production of value instead properly signifies that when a commodity is produced, the labor expended in its manufacture gives the material on which it acts a new form and utility, allowing it to have a new exchangeability whose actual measure will finally be determined not in production, but in the interaction of the market place.

All this bears directly upon the justice of commodity relations, for what Hegel here uncovers in conceiving commodity exchange effectively rules out the principal objections Marx has directed against them.

In *Capital,* Marx first challenges the legitimacy of commodity relations by arguing that commodity exchange results in a fetishism of commodities wherein the social relations between individuals proceed as relations between things ordering their actions.[30] Hegel's analysis has revealed, however, that commodity exchange involves an exercise of freedom completely the reverse of what Marx laments. In the first place, the goods individuals exchange are not things of a merely natural character, but commodities bearing the socially determined qualities of use and exchange values in function of the interdependent

willing of their owners. What allows these goods to be exchanged rather than unilaterally seized, is that their owners agree to treat one another both as free persons, with entitled ownership of their respective commodities, and as independent bearers of interest entitled to exercise the civil right of satisfying needs of their own choosing in reciprocity with others. Consequently, when individuals enter into an exchange, they interact not as subjects of things that rule their lives, but as masters of commodities, utilizing them as subordinate means to satisfy their civil needs and thereby exercise the honored freedom of achieving those particular ends of their own that advance the interests of others.

Nevertheless, even if exchange relations do proceed in a freedom and equality according them the justice of a civil fight, their justice would be purely formal if, as Marx further argues, exchange value derives from expended labor, and commodity production involves a capital-labor relation wherein labor is exploited. These two claims are the core of Marx's critique of commodity relations, but, as in the case of "commodity fetishism," Hegel's concept of exchange unmasks their untenability.

Following the political economists, Marx introduces his labor theory of value, in *Capital,* by arguing that commodities could not be exchanged if they did not share some prior factor giving them all a commensurable exchange value. Since they have different physical properties and utilities, Marx concludes that the common feature allowing for their exchangeability must lie in the labor embodied in them, which forms the commensurable basis of their exchange equivalence when reduced to its quantitative character as abstract labor time.

31 Like all labor theories of value, however, Marx's argument not only assumes that all commodities are produced, but contradicts the voluntary character of commodity exchange. As Hegel has shown, because exchange occurs solely through the free agreement of the owners of the traded commodities, their equivalent exchange value is actually determined by the common resolve of these individuals to exchange them. As a consequence, the exchanged commodities need not be produced, nor can the production process of traded products have any binding effect on the proportions at which they are bought and sold. All factors of production can determine is

the minimum price that must be met if the product is to be sold without a loss in relation to the costs of its manufacture.

Hegel accordingly recognizes that prescriptive economics can further conceive of exchange relations involving money and the earning of profit prior to, and without reference to, commodity production and expended labor.[32] As he indicates, all that is needed for a commodity to function as money is for commodity owners to honor it in

their exchange as the universal equivalent and standard of measure of the exchange value of all other commodities.

33 Although money can thereby operate as a means of exchange, facilitating the trade of two particular goods (represented by the schema C-M-C), individuals can equally advance money in order to receive more in return, simply by finding someone willing to sell them a commodity (M-C), which they can then resell at a higher price to some other willing individual. The free reciprocity of exchange makes this all possible, which is why profit can be made through speculation without any engagement in production.

Marx, however, bases his whole theory of the exploitation of labor on the idea that profit cannot arise out of exchange alone, but must be accounted for by a creation of new exchange value taking place within the process of commodity production. When he analyzes the sequence of two commodity exchanges, represented by the formula M-C-M', wherein one individual buys the commodity of another (M-C), and then sells it for more money than the amount he paid (C-M), Marx reasons that the added exchange value received at the end of the second transaction would contradict the constitutive equivalence of commodity exchange if it had no other origin. Consequently, he concludes, an individual who advances money to receive more in return must obtain his increment by engaging in an intervening production of commodities whereby he pays the hired laborer less for his labor power than the exchange value his labor produces.34 This discrepancy between payment received and value produced comprises the "exploitation" of labor, which Marx admits involves no juridical wrong since the laborer is paid the equivalent exchange value of his labor power and does not own his labor, which is not a commodity with exchange value, but only the form in which the labor power already purchased by his employer is consumed.35 Nevertheless, since for Marx the rate of this exploitation determines the rate of surplus value upon which profit and capital investment ultimately depend, commodity relations would stand determined by a factor relatively independent of reciprocal willing, condemning the principle of civil freedom to an empty formality.

The fatal flaw in Marx's concept of the exploitation of labor is that it rests

completely on the claim that commodities have their exchange value determined by the quantity of abstract labor time embodied in them. Once, however, one follows Hegel's insight that exchange value can only be determined by the mutual agreement of the parties to exchange, it is evident not only that profit can arise through an M-C-M exchange sequence without any intervening commodity production, but that there can be no exploitation of labor in Marx's sense of the term. The latter is precluded simply because the exchange value

of any product bears no necessary relation to the amount of labor expended in its production, but rather depends upon the wills of its prospective buyers, whose independence entails all the variation in sales volumes and price settings that make capital's realization of profit anything but an automatic consequence of its internal organization of production.

If this brings Marx's theory to the point of collapse, it also has central consequences for capital and commodity relations as a whole, consequences that Hegel's prescriptive economics must, and largely does, take into account.

To begin with, insofar as capital realizes its constitutive M-C-M' circuit of exchange with neither any exploitation of labor, nor any necessary engagement in commodity production, capital must be conceived in its proper universality instead of being reduced, as in Marx's *Capital,* to a social structure based on the capital-labor relation specific to privately owned industrial capital employing wage laborers. Although capital can certainly take that particular form, as history testifies, it can equally produce commodities and consummate its M-C-M' exchange sequence without any wage labor at all, if, for example, it operates as a workers' cooperative whose members draw dividends rather than wages. So too, capital can just as well be publicly as privately owned without in any way altering its interaction in the market in pursuit of profit. Whatever the case, whether a unit of capital engage in production, pay wages, or be owned by an individual, a corporation, the state, or a workers' cooperative, it will still face the same market predicament that defines the logic of its constitutive accumulation. Furthermore, since there is nothing about capital that prevents its internal organization from being constructed through the same sort of voluntary agreement comprising the exchanges in which its M-C-M realization of profit consists, capital in no way undermines the legitimacy of commodity relations. On the contrary, capital shares its justice as well as its limitations inasmuch as capital involves the same exercise of right at work in any other market activity. As a result, the theory of capital does not simply describe a merely historical mode of production, but falls within prescriptive economics as the conception of a structural element of the just economy.

Hegel accordingly introduces traces of the profit-earning relation of capital into the system of needs, mentioning the MCM' form of exchange and production for profit.

36 Certainly Hegel's treatment is far too scanty to provide the required conception of capital, but his brevity does reflect the important fact that capital is but an element, rather than the unifying structure, of commodity relations. They cannot be reduced to relations of capital because exchange value does

not derive from embodies labor of any sort, let alone from labor exploited by capital, just as commodities can be traded without their exchange resulting in a profit for either participant.

This means that exchange relations do not resolve themselves into the accumulation process of capital, as Marx tends to suggest, but rather involve produced and non-produced commodities the exchange of which may, but need not, form part of any MCM' capital circuit. Hegel's conception of exchange properly takes this into account by leaving open these possibilities without giving any one hegemony over the rest.

The subordinate character of capital has similar consequences for commodity production. If goods can bear exchange value as com-modifies without issuing from capital, then commodity production can figure within the reciprocal satisfaction of needs with or without profit, as well as with or without wage labor. Prescriptive economics must therefore conceive the forms of commodity production so as to allow for all these options. Hegel achieves this himself by differentiating the basic modes of commodity fabrication without expressly limiting them to capital or any other alternative arrangements. In paragraphs 196-8 of the *Philosophy of Right,* he instead presents in succession the elementary labor process whereby the act of laboring produces a whole new commodity, manufacturing wherein mass production is achieved by both a simple duplication of laboring acts and a division of labor in which each act completes only one step in the product's formation, and, finally, mechanization in which machines step in to replace the rote work of detail labor under the supervision of technicians. What makes all these forms of production normative relations specific to civil society is that they produce commodities for the market, and that those engaged in this production do so in such a way as to satisfy their own needs in reciprocity with others. As such, every one of these forms can just as well be pursued on a nonprofit basis as serve the accumulation of capital, with or without the payment of wages.

Nonetheless, it might appear that Hegel does not maintain the secondary position of capital within the system of needs, for when he proceeds to conceive the total process of commodity relations in its inclusive unity of all commodity exchange and production, he develops his analysis under the

heading of ”Capital” (*das Vermögen*) and outlines how the “capital” of society involves the acquisition of particular “capitals” by its members.

37 In so doing, however, Hegel does not reduce the system of needs to a system of capitals, for what he understands under the rubric of “capital” (*Vermögen*) is simply the general wealth of the civil economy as it is composed of all the particular commodity ownerships and earning activities at play in it. Here

the total capital of society does not designate an ever accumulating aggregate exchange value consisting in the competitive system of particular profit-seeking enterprises. It rather signifies the amalgam of all commodity relations, in whose network if interdependence individuals acquire and dispose of particular "capitals" simply comprising the commodities they own which allow them to satisfy their needs in exchange by way of all those earning activities that they are free to choose among in the System of Needs.

38

If this total network does not result in the hegemony of capital, it does entail the formation of social classes, which Hegel appropriately considers as the next theme of his prescriptive economics.

The Justice of Class Society and the Injustice of Estates

Hegel's account of commodity relations has already indicated how the reciprocal satisfaction of need involves a variety of ways of engaging in exchange and production, wherein different types of earning are linked to different types of commodity ownership and need. For instance, whoever pursues the MCM' circuit of exchange needs capital to advance in the market so as to earn a profit. By contrast, an individual interacting as a landlord needs landed property or some other rentable commodity in order to obtain rent as his form of income, whereas a laborer needs a marketable labor power and whatever else allows him to enter someone else's employ and earn a wage. Consequently, whenever an individual participates in commodity relations, he does so by exercising one, or possibly several different modes of earning shared by whoever else has chosen to satisfy their needs in a similar manner. This means that commodity relations necessarily entail classes consisting in those different groups of individuals who have chosen to pursue a common type of earning with its associated needs and goods.

Since, as Hegel's arguments have indicated, commodity relations involve no exploitation, the economic relation between classes is one not of domination, but of the same mutual exercise of freedom characterizing all

activity in the system of needs. Furthermore, since each class pursues its mode of earning only in a voluntarily entered interdependence with the others, no class will have any automatic command over a privileged amount of earnings in relation to the others.

Belonging to a class is thus in all respects an act of freedom on the part of its members. They belong to a class not by birth or some other factor independent of their wills, but through exercising their civil fight to satisfy freely chosen needs in reciprocity with others. Due to the interdependence of classes, each individual's freely entered class affiliation equally involves relating to members of other classes en-

tirely through recognition and respect of their exercise of that same freedom. Consequently, the class division issuing from the system of needs is nothing but a realization of civil freedom, which is to say that the just society is a class society.

The Marxist ideal of a classless society is, in contrast, utterly unjust, since it requires cancelling the civil freedom to choose both one's needs and how one will satisfy them in reciprocity with others. These freedoms would have to be curtailed, for their exercise is precisely what creates class differences in the first place. The only way a classless society could be achieved would thus be by imposing a regime forcing individuals to restrict their needs to a certain type

39 and to limit the type of exchange and modes of earning in which they engage. Since such a regime is entirely possible, a classless society is not some wistful utopia, but a real threat to social justice and its institutions of freedom.

Hegel begins his discussion of classes by properly pointing out the features that give them their civil legitimacy. He observes that classes directly issue form the workings of commodity relations insofar as different modes of earning tied to different needs and commodity ownerships are automatically pursued by common groups of individuals, given the variety of engagements in exchange and production in which market acitvity consists.40 He accordingly emphasizes that individuals become affiliated with a particular class solely in virtue of how they freely choose to participate in commodity relations.41 He further argues that, since classes issue from commodity relations, what differentiates them from one another must be nothing other than distinct modes of earning specific to the system of needs.42

Nevertheless, when Hegel proceeds to identify and characterize the actual classes of the just economy, he falls back upon conventional descriptions of estates, whose combination of natural foundations and political privilege completely violates the justice of civil society. Turning a blind eye on differences rooted in commodity interaction, he instead introduces a

“substantial” class of peasants and nobles, a “reflective” class embracing market activity as a whole, and a “universal” class primarily consisting of civil servants. The anomaly of this breakdown is obvious.

To start with, Hegel characterizes his substantial class in terms of a naturally bounded livelihood that not only operates wholly outside the system of needs, but has its existence threatened by the spread of commodity relations. Instead of engaging in a particular mode of earning commodities in reciprocity with others, the substantial class lives directly off the land, satisfying a purely household want with produce wrested from the earth independently of exchange.[43] Dependent upon the variable conditions of seasonal changes, fertility,

and so forth, rather than the social necessity of the market, consuming gifts of nature's alien power instead of commodities won through free activity, this entire class subsists in a naturally limited autarchy, free of the insecurity of trade, the search for profit and the caprice of others

44 free, in other words, from any involvement in the constitutive interdependence of commodity relations and the modalities of earning characterizing classes. Almost despite himself, Hegel admits the incompatibility of a peasantry and nobility with the system of needs, by repeatedly describing how the spread of commodity relations undermines the natural basis of the substantial class by liberating the economy of the land from household autarchy and privileged birthright and turning agriculture into a factory industry producing for the market.45

By contrast, what disqualified Hegel's universal class are not natural features, such as those that exclude peasants and nobles from civil society, but an occupational identity deriving from the sphere of public office rather than from the forms of earning rooted in commodity relations themselves. Instead of pursuing particular interests specific to the system of needs, the universal class is characterized as devoting itself to the aims of government.46 Although Hegel variously describes it as a body of civil servants,47 a military class,48 or the entire panoply of soldiers, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and scholars,49 what unites its members is action for the universal end of the state, action that therefore requires political rather than market institutions for its exercise. As a consequence, Hegel is compelled to admit that the activity of the universal class does not comprise a private earning, and that its members must instead be provided with either some *given* private wealth or state support to relieve them of having to attend to their own needs.50 If this were to leave both their class activity and their livelihood unencumbered by engagement in the interdependent earning of the system of needs, then they would fail to practice a distinct mode of economic activity, as required to qualify as a social class. If, on the other hand, their independent wealth and state subsidy were taken in their purely economic form, then the members of the universal class would lose their

common bond and fall instead into the distinct groups of those individuals living off unearned wealth and wages, respectively.

Insofar as this leaves the characteristic identity of the universal class as exogneous to commodity relations as that of peasants and nobles, it is not surprising that Hegel characterizes his remaining “reflective” class as if its earning involved all activities of the system of needs. The members of this class consume only what they earn through their own diligence and free choice, treating nature as a wholly subordinate material and premising their activity upon the needs and labor of

others.

51 Unlike the substantial and universal classes, this reflective class directs itself upon the particular through relations of mutual dependency wherein its members engage in commerce and trade, manufacture commodities, and advance capital52 in a word, doing everything commodity relations call for. As a result, the reflective class does not represent one mode of earning, but rather contains the entire genuine class division within itself. Hegel effectively shows this by subdividing the reflective class into three groups, differentiated, as social classes should be, by their types of engagement in commodity relations.53

What all this indicates is that Hegel's characterization of classes must be rejected and replaced by a class division wholly endogenous to commodity relations. This needed revision also entails, however, fundamental changes in the structure of civil society and the state. As the above arguments have shown, if there is to be a just civil society, peasants and nobles must be excluded, civil servants must lose their social status as a separate class and be incorporated instead into the type of groups Hegel subsumes under his reflective class, and these groups must themselves cease to be sections of a single class and rather comprise the classes in their entirety. Furthermore, since the corporations consist in the voluntary associations formed to advance the particular shared interests arising out of the common forms of earnng of the system of needs,54 they can no longer be the special prerogative of a single class. Hegel makes the reflective class the corporations' privileged soil55 insofar as he subsumes all commodity interaction under it, but with a true class division, corporations become a matter for every class.

These alterations in society have equally significant ramifications for the state, since Hegel's classes bear distinct political privileges that are the other side of their estate identity. This is most evident when Hegel conceives the estate element of the legislative power. Here his suspect class division assumes a political role, producing government institutions incompatible with not only the proper class structure of civil society, but the independence political freedom should achieve through the demarcation of

civil society and the state. Although the political function of the legislature requires an assembly representing *political* opinion about what laws should be enacted to realize the constitution in face of changing circumstances in society, government, and foreign affairs,[56] Hegel calls for a bicameral *estate* assembly, where the lower chamber represents the interests of civil society as a whole, and the upper chamber represents the universal interest of state authority as something somehow rooted in civil society itself.[57] Because Hegel effectively subsumes the entire system of needs under the

reflective class, he assigns it the lower chamber, even though civil interest could properly be represented only if all *social* classes were admitted.

58 Conversely, Hegel makes the upper chamber a house of lords precisely because the nobility is totally extraneous to the system of needs and therefore suited to masquerade as that element "of" civil society that stands aloof from social interest and so supposedly provides the civil foundation for the universal ends of politics.59 Since, however, the nobility has no place in civil society, and the classes are properly defined by purely social pursuits, their mediation with the state cannot occur from within themselves, but must take place from the side of the state through a rule *over* civil society that protects and enforces its social justice in conformity with the exercise of political freedom. Consequently, the legislative assembly should have no class representation of any sort, for the universal ends it addresses are common to all individuals in their capacity as citizens.

The Limits of Commodity Relations and the Realization of Social Justice

If Hegel introduces, but improperly characterizes, the class division inherent in civil society, he does succeed in uncovering the intrinsic inability of commodity relations to realize for all the exercise of right in which they consist. As Hegel indicates, this endemic limit to the justice of the economy has two sides that call for two different remedies.

On the one hand, all commodity interaction presupposes, but cannot enforce, the property relations allowing for commodity ownership, civil need and exchange. Even as the abstract fight of persons is subject to conflict of nonmalicious wrong, fraud, and outright crime, which it has no means to adjudicate and punish in an objectively binding manner,60 so the just economy cannot secure the person and property of its participants through its own relations of commodity exchange. Since they can only proceed themselves so long as property fights are not violated, commodity relations are incapable of guaranteeing either the preconditions of every exchange or the altered commodity ownership in which it results. Therefore, Hegel concludes, the just economy must be supplemented by a public administration of civil law enforcing property fights with a

recognized and effective authority to adjudicate disputes, punish offenders, and re-tribute their victims.[61]

Although the institution of this public administration of civil law can secure what individuals own before, during, and after engaging in economic activity, it cannot remove the inability of the civil economy to insure the reciprocal satisfaction of the needs generated within

commodity relations as matters of social fight. This remains a problem that the civil protection of property cannot resolve, for two reasons duly indicated in Hegel's discussion.

To begin with, precisely because the just economy consists in commodity relations operating through mutual agreements of exchange, its members can never be assured of meeting others in the market who not only have needs and commodities correlating with their own, but the will to enter into exchange.

62 Whether the commodities involved be produced or nonproduced, whether their exchange be part of a circuit of capital, and whether that capital be advanced by an individual, a private corporation, a worker cooperative, or a state enterprise, each party's ability to satisfy their particular commodity needs still depends upon the free, and accordingly, arbitrary decision of others to market the needed goods in return for what that party offers, be it money, labor power, capital, or some other commodity. So long as commodity relations have free sway, no participant in the market can count on encountering consumers or producers able and willing to conclude any sought exchange.

What compounds this contingency in entering exchange is the development of disparities in wealth that result from commodity relations, but create barriers for the less wealthy in satisfying their needs in the market. The very freedom of commodity relations always allows for some economic agents to amass commodities through exchange of such great exchange value as to enable them to engage more easily in further transactions, while prejudicing the opportunity of others to do the same. Because such specifically social inequality requires nothing more than commodity exchange to come into being, its existence does not depend on what type of commodity ownership predominates. Since nothing in the internal structure of a participant in the market can free it from operating through mutual agreements with other independent participants, neither nonprofit nor profit-making corporations, private nor public enterprises, corporate nor worker self-managed firms can prevent differences in wealth from arising, which undermine the equal

opportunity of individuals to satisfy their chosen needs in reciprocity with others.

As a consequence, there can be no invisible hand whereby commodity relations order themselves so as to guarantee the economic welfare of all, as political economists would like to believe. On the contrary, because the opportunity to participate in the civil economy is left unsecured by the commodity relations comprising the exercise of that fight, any “free enterprise” system entails social injustice and must be rejected. This applies not only to a system of unregulated private capitals, but to any social order that seeks to resolve the problem of economic welfare through a principle of organization internal

to the economy, such as worker self-management or public ownership or individual enterprises.

On the other hand, social justice cannot be achieved by replacing the market with a totally planned economy in which either a centralized state authority or decentralized communes determine the occupation and received goods of each individual. Even if this ordering were accomplished through democratic procedures, as in a radical kibbutz, it would eliminate the freedom of particularity that requires commodity relations to enable individuals to choose independently what they need and how they will earn a corresponding living in conjunction with others. After all, it is precisely the inability of some to exercise this *freedom* that is the social wrong that should be righted. Accordingly, the solution to social injustice does not consist in eliminating commodity relations, but in providing all with the opportunity to participate in their reciprocal satisfaction of freely chosen needs.

Hegel understands this far better than those who stand him on his head, and therefore, he recognizes that the remedy to social inequality lies not in the overthrow of commodity relations, but outside the economic order altogether, in two separate civil institutions which he calls the corporations and the police. Their task is not pre-empted by the public administration of civil law, because the latter's protection of property only preserves the given distribution of wealth instead of altering it so that all can actually satisfy their need through action of their own choosing.

Hegel introduces corporations because he recognizes that civil society gives its members the right to form social interest groups to advance jointly their common needs, so long as they do so in conformity with the market and civil law. These groups, which can issue from any of the classes,

63 enjoy civil legitimacy because they are voluntary, they forward particular interests that can only be realized in reciprocity with those of others, and they thus can only pursue their common cause by participating in, rather than supplanting, civil institutions. This mandates that their field of action lies in the market and the institutions of civil law, and thereby sets the limit of their ability to right the social wrong endemic to the just economy.

On the other hand, the members of social interest groups can take legal action together to protect their property with greater effect, but that alone cannot secure the satisfaction of their needs. In the market, on the other hand, they can collectively decide under what terms to enter into exchange so as to facilitate transactions in their interest through the pressure of their common front. Since, however, such activity does not unilaterally appropriate the commodities of others, but only aims to persuade them to agree to a desired exchange, it cannot overcome the dependence of its members' welfare upon the

arbitrary exchange decisions of others, which is what calls for common corporate action in the first place. Because corporations are but particular groups that can only satisfy their members' need with the consent of other independent participants in the market, no corporation can guarantee the welfare of its members, nor need any success it achieves benefit members of other corporations or unaffiliated individuals beyond what they may receive as opposite parties to exchange. Although the activity of corporations does comprise a further mode of civil freedom, it thus cannot be counted on to remove social injustice, and may just as well worsen as alleviate the inequality of wealth.

64

The plight of corporations thus reveals that, if social justice is to be achieved, the civil economy must be subject to an additional enforcement of welfare that is neither directed upon the members of a certain class, nor administered by private groups, whose efforts are con-strained by the arbitrariness of others. The very rights founded in commodity relations require that social interest group activity be supplemented by a *public* administration of welfare, addressing all members of society, and issuing from a universally respected civil authority empowered to guarantee them the chance to satisfy their freely selected commodity needs through economic activity of their own choice. Hegel introduces his "police" to carry out precisely this task, duly aware of its decisive role in setting the economy in its proper subordinate position within the just society.

Here once again Marx's ideal of communism falls short of the requirements that prescriptive economics ordains. Since social justice concerns realizing the legitimate freedom of commodity relations, it extends beyond the imperatives of man's species being and the normative neutrality of monological action. Accordingly, the public administration of welfare cannot subscribe to the motto, "From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs," which leaves both work and need vehicles of natural liberty, without the mutuality of right and duty that grants each normative validity. Instead, it must aim at the far more ambitious goal of

guaranteeing the reciprocal satisfaction of freely chosen needs through freely entered exchange relations.

Although Hegel's account of the "police" is brief at best, his conception of commodity relations already prescribes the twofold way in which public authority must secure the welfare of all as an exercise of their civil freedom: at one and the same time, public authority must ensure that the commodities needed by individuals be in adequate and affordable supply in the market, and that all have the commodities they require to obtain through exchange what they need.

As Hegel notes, this cannot be achieved through a public dole

unilaterally alotting individuals goods to consume and jobs to perform, for that would eliminate, rather than secure, their civil freedom to choose what they need and how they will earn a corresponding livelihood.

65 Similarly, the civil authorities cannot impose an absolute equality of wealth, stipulating either the specific goods or total exchange value each is to have, for that would not be identical with the enforcement of everyone's right to realize interdependent interests, which would involve completely different commodities and levels of wealth that result from the varying preferences of individuals.

Nevertheless, the unrestricted character of civil need and the inequality endemic to commodity relations require public regulation quite radical in scope. Since, as Hegel has shown, commodity relations entail the limitless multiplication and refinement of needs, public authority must cope with ever possible inadequacies in the supply of commodities by both restricting the needs whose satisfaction it guarantees and regulating the actual resources of the economy to furnish the market with as much of the needed goods as possible. These dual impositions are just insofar as they apply to everyone and enable all to satisfy needs of their own choosing in reciprocity with others, albeit within limits determined solely so as to allow all to engage in that reciprocal satisfaction itself.

Analogously, wherever inequality of wealth reaches such a magnitude as to create social disadvantage, civil authority must act to ensure that all do have adequate means to earn the livelihood they desire through action of their choice, given the capabilities of the economy. Since inequality is not a wrong unless it presents barriers to someone's desired participation in the market, enforcing the welfare of the disadvantaged needs to involve an administered redistribution of wealth only when other options are lacking.66 When redistribution is required, the right of civil society would mandate that it be accomplished through monetary taxation and payment, rather than by dispossession and receipt of specific goods, for as Hegel argues, the former method preserves the freedom of particularity by letting each individual choose what to relinquish or acquire.67 Although Hegel does not explicitly comment on the limits of such redistribution, the mandate of his

police would suggest that whatever is necessary to eliminate social disadvantage is justified to the extent that the freedoms of commodity relations are upheld.[68]

In these ways the right of interest brought into being by commodity relations entails a perennial regulation of the economy whereby civil authority enforces both the property rights and welfare of individuals in accord with the varying conditions of the market and the unalterable norms of economic freedom. Since this enforcement consists in an intervention *upon* commodity relations, rather than in their re-

moval, the just economy remains the institutional base of civil society, both presupposed and referred to by all other civil relations. Nevertheless, because the justice of commodity relations mandates their public regulation, the civil economy is the *subordinate* and not the determining base of the just society. If, on the contrary, society stands under the sway of the market, be it ruled by private capitalists, worker self-managed cooperatives, or government enterprises, there will be an unfree society, lacking the public subordination of the economy that can alone realize everyone's civil freedom to satisfy needs for commodities through freely chosen activity.

Significantly, these considerations of social justice do not lead Hegel to adopt the view of social democracy that the state should be a welfare state devoted to administering the public welfare with the consent of the governed.

69 Instead, he recognizes that if there is to a just society and state, the civil subordination of the economy must be supplemented by a political subordination of civil society that frees self-government from relegation to a management of the economy. This is the result of the inherent dependency of civil institutions and contrasting independence of just politics. By themselves, the civil administrations of law and public welfare cannot provide the necessary conditions for their own existence. They lack not only the legislative power to furnish the laws they apply and obey, but also the source of authority to give their activities obligatory force for all individuals. On the other hand, if the state were restricted the functions of civil regulation, politics would be bound to independently determined interests, leaving government unable to set its own aims and exercise the genuine sovereignty that makes the reality of right a self-grounding order.

Hegel therefore places civil society under the rule of constitutional self-government which realizes political freedom as an end in itself, but also secures the other freedoms to the degree that they comprise its own prerequisites.70 The sovereign state thus grants civil administration the law, power, and authority it needs on the political basis of the constitution and government legislation. Since, however, politics must remain supreme or forfeit its constitutive sovereignty, governments must not only insure the

social regulation of the economy, but exercise a political regulation of its own to prevent economic interest from undermining political freedom. Hegel raises this issue primarily in reference to wartime measures that restrict civil freedom for the sake of defending national sovereignty.[71] Because peacetime politics requires economic means to conduct political activity,[72] the state must also intervene to insure that all citizens have adequage resources to engage in politics so that economic power does not become a basis of political privilege.

If Hegel has not provided a full account of these political tasks, his prescriptive economics has set a challenge for the modem economy of abiding social and political relevance. This challenge presents three imperatives of justice: first, that the economy be made a sphere of right, offering everyone the full array of commodity relations; second, that civil authority regulate the economy to guarantee all their exercise of economic freedom; and third, that government act to prevent economic power and interest from obstructing political freedom. In face of the capitalisms and socialisms of today, these imperatives remain everywhere matters for all.

Notes

1. With the rise of industrial society, its global expansion through colonialism, imperialism, and revolution, the development of socialist and fascist movements, and the continuing rivalry of communist and capitalist blocs, virtually all sides in the political arena have come to regard economic relations as a normative concern of the highest order. Whether it be under the banner of bourgeois independence from serfdom, civilizing industry for the non-Western world, free enterprise versus totalitarianism, or the free association of producers to end all exploitation and class division, the economy has recurringly been ascribed a constitutive place within the just society that political action should seek to secure.

2. When classical political economy conceives a need to be naturally determined by human physical requirements, derives exchange from a natural inclination to barter, and defines capital as the stock of goods required to sustain the laborer's life during production (see Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* [New York: Random House, 1937], pp. 13, 259), it is effectively adopting this position as much as does neoclassical economics when it defines the factors of production as naturally scarce resources (David P. Levine, *Contributions to the Critique of Economic Theory* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977], pp. 198, 236), or as do such thinkers as Marx (Karl Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1 [New York: International Publishers, 1970], pp. 46, 167) and Hannah Arendt (Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958], p. 96 ff) when they characterize production as an anthropological factum of man's species being.

3. When marginal utility theorists draw their demand curves, when Heidegger (Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* trans. W. Lovitt [New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977], pp. 3-35) and Habermas (Jörgen Habermas, ”Labor and Interaction,” in *Theory and Practice* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1973], p. 142ff) reduce production to technique and instrumental action, or when econometricians and socialist planners attempt to guide economies with schemes for technically allocating given resources, the result is the same exclusion of any normative, let alone social, dimension from the economic realities at hand.

4. Aristotle *Politics,* 1254al-8, 1258b.

5. I. Kant, *Critique of Judgement,* trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner and Co., 1951), p. 9.

6. Smith, *Wealth of Nations,* p. 14.

7. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), remark to par. 189.

8. The example of Rousseau shows that the conflation of social and political domains can go either way in defining "political economy," depending on whether civil society or civil government are emphasized. In Rousseau's *Discourse on Political Economy,* he reduces all legitimate social activity to that of civil government, and accordingly characterizes political economy as the business of public administration.

9. Operative practice may indeed be the order to which action conforms, but that only signifies that the conformity has the quality of being, and not that it has legitimacy.

10. If, for example, an economic order were relative to certain cultural factors which were not themselves structures of justice commanding unconditional respect, that economy would be determined by a convention that was not just, and thereby lack legitimacy.

11. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* pars. 1, 29.

12. Hegel treats it as a theme in his theory of Subjective Spirit, under the heading, "Practical Spirit."

13. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* remark to par. 71.

14. Ibid., remark to par. 261.

15. If that were so, freedom and justice would remain apart, forfeiting their common normativeness and outruling any philosophy of right, let alone one developed as the theory of objective freedom.

16. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 37.

17. Ibid., par. 260, remark to par. 261.

18. Ibid., par. 127.

19. If, for example, individuals happen to satisfy certain physical or psychological needs, such as for air or affection, without interacting as proprietors of what the other needs, those needs play no role in the social relations of the community of interest.

20. Although Hegel does make brief mention of the relationship of capital and labor, he treats it as a subordinate element within the system of needs, rather than as a privileged determining structure that envelopes and orders all commodity relations within its process of capital accumulation. See pp. 343ff.

21. As a result, two of his three classes, the so-called substantial and universal ones, have identities entirely unrelated to commodity relations, whereas the remaining class, the so-called reflective one, pursues all the types of earning specific to the system of needs. See pp. 348ff.

22. The terms of this mandate will naturally have fundamental significance for evaluating the competing claims of laissez-faire capitalism, social democracy, and communism.

23. As Hegel's own example indicates, any consideration of commodity production, the total wealth of the market, or class relations presupposes this relationship of reciprocally needy commodity owners, and must be treated subsequently.

24. See note 2, above; also, Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, p. 36.

25. In his *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 4, Edition Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), p. 475, Hegel accordingly observes that what needs should be satisfied and what should be the means of their satisfaction cannot be preordained, for an individuals' civil need can only have content, so long as what satisfies it is owned by someone else, just as a commodity can be anything, so long as it is property needed by someone other than its owner.

26. *Ibid.,* p. 605; Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 195.

27. Hegel foreshadows this in par. 77 of the *Philosophy of Right,* and treats it thematically in par. 192.

28. In his essay, "Zum Abschluss des Marxschen Systems," (in *Aspikte der Marxschen Theorie 1: Zur methodischen Bedeutung des 3. Bandes des "Kapital", ed.* F. Eberle (Frankfurt-am-Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), Eugen v. Böhm-Bawerk rightly points out how the exchange value of nonproduced goods poses an insoluble problem for Marx's labor theory of value.

29. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 196.

30. Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, pp. 71ff.

31. Ibid., pp. 38ff.

32. Thus, in his *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, Edition Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), pp. 630-1, Hegel lists three principal forms of exchange: (1) the exchange of money for particular commodities, (2) the exchange of commodities for money, and (3) the exchange of money for more money, leaving aside all mention of whether the commodities involved be products or not.

33. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 204, 299, addition to par. 63; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie IV, op. cit.,* pp. 228-229.

34. Marx, *Capital,* vol. 1, pp. 166ff.

35. Ibid., chaps. 6 and 7.

36. See note 32; Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 199; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, pp. 619-20, vol. 4, pp. 626-7.

37. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* pars. 199, 200.

38. For this reason, T. M. Knox would have done better to translate "*Vermögen*" as "wealth," rather than as "capital."

39. For instance, needs could be limited to consumer goods, rather than capital or rentable commodities.

40. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 201; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 1, Edition Ilting (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1974), pp. 314-5; vol. 3, p. 621; vol. 4, p. 511.

41. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 206; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 1, p. 322; vol. 3, pp. 635, 638.

42. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 201; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, pp. 632-624.

43. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 203.

44. Ibid., pars. 203, 305, 306; addition to par. 204; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, p. 628.

45. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* addition to par. 203. Significantly, Hegel notes that this occurs through the activity of the reflective class, whose pursuit of business deprives the peasantry and nobility of their substantial foundation

in the land and pulls them down into the ranks of factory operatives (Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, p. 626). Such a relation of one-sided annihilation, so at odds with civil interdependence, is only to be expected, for the class embodying the spirit of commodity relations can solely come upon the substantial class as a vestige of precivil relations to be uprooted and done away with. Hegel makes this unambiguously clear when he remarks that the peasantry and nobility are necessarily confronted with force and compulsion by the *introduction* of commodity relations (Ibid., vol. 4, p. 515), which, far from containing the natural ties of the substantial class, actually leave no room for them. In this connection, Hegel also observes that the entailed forced elimination of the substantial class has indeed occurred in the country with the most developed civil society of his day, England, where land exists only as a material for factory-like employment and use (Ibid., vol. 4, p. 517).

46. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 303.

47. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, p. 632.

48. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* addition to par. 296.

49. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 4, p. 521.

50. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 205.

51. Ibid., par. 204, addition to par. 203.

52. Ibid., par. 250; Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, p. 629; vol. 1, p. 315; G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind,* trans. W. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), par. 528.

53. Hegel, *Vorlesungen Über Rechtsphilosophie,* vol. 3, pp. 630-31; vol. 4, p. 520. In place of estates of peasants and nobles and civil servants, these groups comprise a handicraft class, making individual goods to satisfy singular needs, a factory class mass producing commodities for socially differentiated needs, and a commercial class, having exchange as its business and exchange value as its end (Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 628-31, vol. 4, p. 520; Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 204). It can thus come as no surprise that, when Hegel does use the term *Klasse* instead of *Stand,* it is to describe

either the proletariat (Ibid., par. 243), whose identity rests entirely on its role in commodity production and so forms a genuine social class rather than an estate, or the "wealthier classes" (Ibid., par. 245), whose identity is equally economic in character.

54. Ibid., par. 251.

55. Ibid., par. 250.

56. Hegel indicates this himself in pars. 298 and 301 of the *Philosophy of Right.*

57. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* pars. 303-12.

58. Ibid., par. 308.

59. Ibid., par. 305-307.

60. Ibid., par. 82ff, 102.

61. Ibid., par. 209-29.

62. Ibid., pars. 200, 230, 236, 237.

63. See page 352.

64. This applies as much to labor unions, business associations, and consumer groups as to federations of communes or worker self-managed enterprises.

65. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* par. 245.

66. For example, adequate self-financing public works could serve this purpose, providing both work opportunities and needed commodities, *if* they did not exacerbate already existing overproduction in certain branches of industry, a circumstance Hegel warns against in par. 245.

67. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* remark to par. 299.

68. Because of the endem'lc contingency of market relations, the measures of the public administration of welfare would have to be continually revised in reaction to the changing situation of the economy.

69. See Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* remark to par. 258.

70. Ibid., pars. 260, 261.

71. Ibid., pars. 323, 324.

72. This includes resources not only to fund political organizations and mount political campaigns, but to have access to the public through the media.

Index

A

Abraham, 60.

Absolute Spirit, 65ff., 101ff., 112f, 117f, 173, 182.

Abstract Right, 134, 148.

Abstraction, 158.

Aesthetic, 1ff., 102ff., 105ff.

Aquinas, 2.

Aristotle, 2, 66, 127, 174, 189f, 220, 223.

Art, 173ff.

Auden, W. H., 4.

Augsburg Confession, 75.

Augustine, 2, 38.

Autonomy, 77ff., 93ff.

Ayer, A. J., 5.

B

Baader, F. von, 23.

Bacon, F., 16, 40.

Barth, K., 73.

Beauty, 1f.

Bernard, Clairvaux, 38.

Bildung, 154.

Boehme, J., 15ff. Boehme's conception of God, 18ff., 23f.

Brinton, H. H., 41.

C

Cabala, 40, 67.

Capital, 231ff., 235ff.

Catholicism, 73f.

Christianity, 48ff., 53, 62, 70, 75ff., 106ff.

Chronos, 155.

Civil religion, 84.

Civil society, 135, 147, 156, 225f.

Classes, 238, 242, 245.

Coleridge, S. T., 38.

Community, 117ff.

Comte, A., 149.

Constitution, 137ff., 146f.

Concept, 68.

Creation, 25ff.

Croce, B., 195, 198, 209.

Cunning of reason, 120.

Cusanus, 22.

D

Darwin, C., 149.

Death of art, 174.

Descartes, R., 79.

Desire, 203f.

Dialectic, 16, 31, 68, 176.

Diamat, 150.

Duhem, P., 3.

E

Eckhart, 22, 38.

Economics, 219.

End of history, 129, 173, 185f.

Engels, F., 151.

Enlightenment, 73ff., 93ff., 151ff., 210.

Erigena, 22, 38.

Estates, 239ff.

Eternal history, 101ff., 117ff.

Eucharist, 76ff.

Evil, 28.

F

Fackenheim, E. L., 199ff.

Faith, 93ff.

Fall, 21.

Family, 135, 226.

Fear, 208ff.

Fichte, J. G., 22, 67, 74, 156, 196ff., 203.

Foundationalism, 127ff., 146.

Fox, G., 38.

Freedom, 75, 129ff., 153, 159.

French Revolution, 158ff.

G

General will, 155.

God, 16, 37, see Boehme, 67.

Goethe, J. W. yon, 22.

Gnosticism, 16, 38.

Guttman, J., 67, 70.

H

Habermas, J., 133, 147.

Harris, H, 3.

Herder, J. G., 47ff.

Historicism, 65.

History of art, 101ff.

History of religion, 101ff.

History.of philosophy, 101ff.

Hobbes, T., 152ff., 161, 222.

Holderlin, J. C. F., 1, 3.

Homer, 1.

I

Identity, 20.

Image, 5.

Interpretation, 142f.

J

Jacobi, F. H., 74.

Jesus, 49ff.

Judaism, 47ff, 67ff.

Justice, 125ff, 223, 228.

K

Kant, I, 55, 74, 147, 151ff, 155, 178, 203f., 209, 214, 216, 220, 223.

Keats, J, 181.

Kierkegaard, S., 81, 206.

Knowledge, 125.

Knox, T. M., 188.

Krochmal, N., 55ff, 65ff.

Krug, T., 196, 214.

L

Labor theory of value, 234ff.

Landau, J. L., 67.

Language, 2, 6, 8, 10.

Law, W., 38.

Leibniz, G, 2, 152.

Lessing, J. G., 55.

Life, 201ff.

Locke, J., 153, 222.

Lucifer, 20, 25, 29.

Luther, M., 73f., 93ff

M

Maimonides, 55ff, 66.

Marx, K., 149ff, 173, 203, 231, 234ff.

Mediation, 153ff., 196ff.

Mendelssohn, M., 55, 66.

Merleaun-Ponty, M, 149.

Michelet, K. L, 37ff.

Monotheism, 51, 59.

Morality, 134, 226.

Mythology, 7.

N

Napolean, 141.

National history, 65.

Nature, 195.

Negative, 29.

Novalia, 22, 38.

O

Objective spirit, 102.

O’Brien, G. D., 185.

Oetinger, F. C, 23.

Oriental World, 51, 66.

P

Paracelsus, 30.

Parminides, 10.

Perfection, 152ff.

Philo, 66.

Plato, 2f, 10, 13, 127, 176.

Plotinus, 2, 38.

Poetry, 1ff.

Politics, 49ff.

Political economy, 222ff., 231, 244.

Positivism, 149.

Poverty, 236.
Practical Philosophy, 149ff, 161, 167.
Prescriptive economics, 221.
Proclus, 38f.
Profit, 236.
Progress, 150ff.
Property, 226, 243.
Protestantism, 48, 73ff, 93ff.
Proverbs, Book of, 10.
Pseudo-Dionysius, 39.
Pufendorf, S. von, 162.
Pythagoras, 10.
R
Radwidowicz 5, 67.
Rawls, J., 127.
Reconciliation, 30.
Reformation, 73ff.
Rembrandt, 178.
Representation, 68.
Riedl, M., 167.
Right, 123ff.
Robespierre, 158.
Romanticism, 23.
Rosenkranz, K, 74.

Rousseau, J.-J., 151ff, 222.

Rusell, B, 5.

S

Saint-Martin, L. C., 23

Sartre, J.-P., 206.

Schelling, F. W. J. von, 2, 22, 38, 196ff.

Schlegel, A. W, 22.

Schlegel, F., 22.

Schleiermacher, F, 74.

Schopenhauer, A, 178.

Shakespeare, W, 2.

Sittlichkeit, 83.